The University of Chicago

THE EVOLUTION OF CONWAY ARKANSAS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

1937

By

HUBERT LEE MINTON

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FOREWORD

Personality

Conway, a city of about 6,000 people[1] in central Arkansas, is a representative community. In its general appearance (Fig.1), in its pattern, and in its business activities, it resembles, in many ways, cities of similar size throughout the western part of the Cotton Belt. The business section extends, for the most part, along the railroad tracks and is centered around the railroad station. Low brick structures, in varying states of repair, line the narrow business streets. Permanent awnings, suspended from the fronts of these buildings, afford shelter to pedestrians from sun and rain. On Saturday, the great market day, country shoppers throng the business streets and sidewalks; and cheap makes of automobiles, largely old models, fill the parking spaces. A few small wholesale houses cling to one edge of the district and cotton storage yards claim some of the nearby vacant lots. Several small manufacturing establishments, including ice plants, cotton gins, a cotton compress, and a creamery--enterprises typical in kind and number for such a community--fringe the outer margins of the business district. A new county court house rises prominently from a roomy yard nearby.

Dwellings, with few exceptions, are modest frame or brick-veneer structures without basements and without second stories. They are placed well back from the streets and, as a rule, are surrounded by spacious well-kept lawns, dotted with shrubbery and trees. Large shade trees border most of the streets and towering native oaks rise here and there over the landscape. Unkempt vacant lots increase in number toward the outer border. Here the streets are unpaved and even without sidewalks, except near the campuses of the three colleges, where, as in the heart of the city, superior residential districts again appear. These minor districts extend outside the city limits along all much-travelled

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[1] In 1930, 5,534.

Fig. 1.--A view of the business section of Conway in 1930, looking northeast. Note the spacious square and the location of the railroad station within it. The wide east-west street focusing upon the station is Main Street which approaches the square at the mid-point of its north-south dimension. Note that the business houses are grouped around the northern half of the square. The business section has its nucleus at the northeast corner, indicated by the three-story building, and spreads away to the north and to the east. The County Court House is seen in the lower left hand corner of the picture. It has been replaced by a new building since the picture was made.

roads and gradually give place, along irregular border lines, to fields, pastures and woodlands.

Throughout its history, Conway has been, above all else, a trading center for the surrounding country-side. It was founded in 1871 in an area where agricultural settlement had been in progress for several decades and where opportunities for further development apparently were confined to farming. A general store and a saloon, both catering to a country trade, were among the earlier business establishments located on its streets. Livery stables and wagon yards appeared promptly, and in their thriving business emphasized the reciprocal relationship between country and village. Blacksmiths, cobblers, and cabinet makers likewise appeared early and depended chiefly on the patronage of farmers. Additional business houses sprang up, as years passed, in response to a growing country trade. Retail credit merchants, doing a "furnishing business" to farmers, held a virtual monopoly in the trade of the town until the establishment of local banks. Realtors opened offices at an early date, their activities relating chiefly to rural lands. Local banks, the first of which was established in 1890, made most of their loans to farmers. The few manufacturing establishments, with one exception, were founded to care for needs of the surrounding rural area and they still depend entirely upon it. The growth of the city has not been marked by any decided boom. No mining interests ever materialized. With an exception to be noted later, the growth in population has closely reflected that of the surrounding territory. In the future, as in the past, the growth of the city will depend in large part upon the development of the supporting country-side.

Although Conway is a typical community of the Cotton Belt in many ways, as already indicated, it is exceptional in being an important center of higher education. The buildings and campuses of its three colleges are significant and impressive. The varied supplies and services required by the faculties and students have greatly enlarged the scope of various economic activities of the city and so have contributed significantly to its growth. The appearance of its business section, almost as clearly as its college halls, reveals at a glance its second basis of support.

Treatment

Four distinctive stages in the evolution of Conway have been recognized--viz., infancy, early youth, adolescence, and maturity. For the most part the development of the city has been gradual and regular, one stage giving place to the next without abrupt general changes. Nevertheless, each stage was introduced by an event which injected a new factor of importance into the life of the community; and each stage was marked by distinguishing characteristics, some of which were strikingly reflected in the attitude of the community toward its current problems and its prospects. The advent of the railroad in 1871 gave the community its start as a pioneer farm village. Uncertain but hopeful about its future, the village was little more than a railroad point of contact for the surrounding rapidly developing rural area until after the establishment of a new county and the designation of Conway as its seat in 1873. These events marked the beginning of the second stage in the evolution of the town and enabled it to expand with youthful vigor and confidence. The third stage was initiated by the coming of the first college in 1890, an event which, together with the advent of the other two colleges, afforded a new basis for growth, increased the confidence of the community in its future, and fostered a cosmopolitan mode of life. This stage was marked by thriving economic conditions and by a steady growth in business and population which was definitely checked in the early 1920's following the close of the World War. Thus a fourth stage was inconspicuously introduced. In this stage there was a trend, until the depression, toward economic and social stabilization and toward conservatism in community affairs. Of late, and partly because of the depression, misgivings concerning the future of the city are apparent in some quarters. Perhaps they foreshadow readjustments which soon or later may inaugurate another stage in the life of Conway.

Each of the four stages noted is described and interpreted in a separate chapter. A final chapter attempts to appraise the early future of the city.

CHAPTER I

INFANCY

The Need for a Trade and Service Center

Size and location of area involved.--Conway was founded in 1871 chiefly because the people of a large agricultural area were severely handicapped by the lack of a good and easily accessible trading center. Even today, a large area between the Arkansas and Little Red rivers is inadequately equipped with railroads and first class highways. Most of this area is economically tributary to Conway today. Even more of it was tributary to Conway in early days, but it is impracticable definitely to bound it. Before the advent of the railroad, this region was served chiefly by four river towns: Lewisburg[1] (now Morrilton) and Little Rock[2] on the Arkansas, Des Arc[3] on the White, and Searcy-West Point[4] on the Little Red (Fig. 2). Batesville, at the head of continuous navigation on the White, drew some trade from the northern part of the area, but the deeply entrenched Little Red could be crossed at few places and these only at times of low water; consequently Batesville was relatively unimportant to the region.

Difficulties in transportation.--Many farmers living between the Little Red and Arkansas rivers could reach one of these river towns only by a long trip over very poor roads. Hills had to be climed (Fig. 3), some of which were so steep that a wagoner often fastened a sharpened fence post to the rear of the wagon in

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[1]Lewisburg was laid out in 1830 as the county seat of Conway County. Dallas T. Herndon, Centennial History of Arkansas (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, 1919), I, 7 and 46. It was replaced by Morrilton with the coming of the railroad in 1871.

[2]Little Rock was laid out as a town in 1820 and incorporated in 1827; ibid., pp. 8-28.

[3]Des Arc was founded in 1831; ibid., pp. 8 and 93.

[4]So designated because the trade center, Searcy, was not located on a river but depended upon West Point, eight miles away, for its river connection.

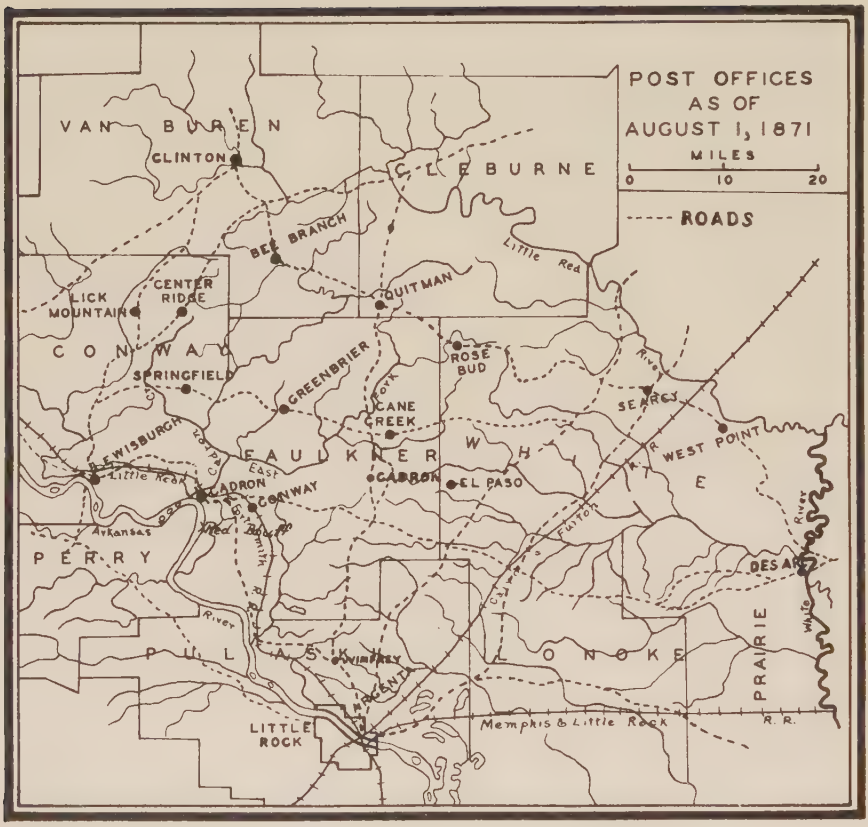

Fig. 2.--Map of Central Arkansas in 1871; immediately after the completion of the Little Rock and Ft. Smith Railroad, showing the post offices and the transportational pattern of the time. Note that Conway had no road leading to it at that time. Taken from Langtree's Map of Arkansas 1874, Library of Congress. The list of existing post offices was taken from records in the Post Office Department, Washington.

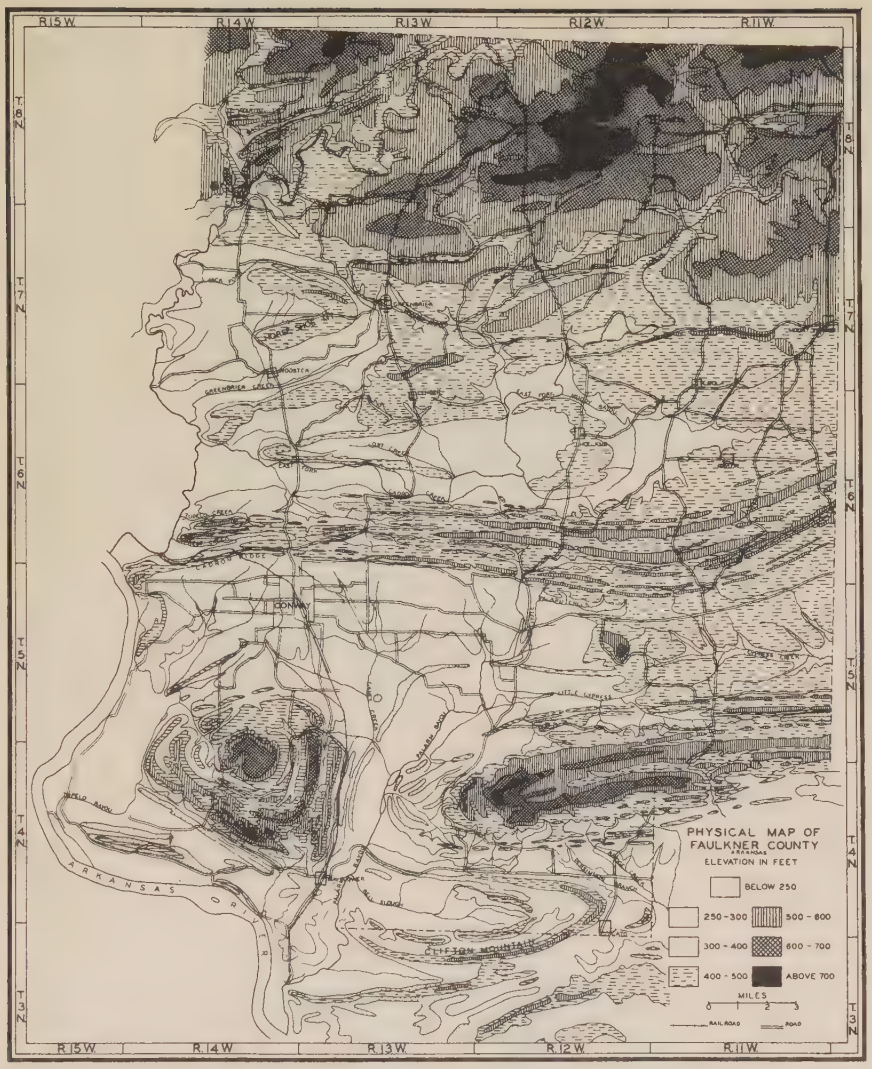

Fig. 3.--Physical Map of Faulkner County, including the principal villages and the Main County roads as of 1917. Contour interval, 100 feet. Contours are interpolated from bordering topographic maps, Morrilton, Little Rock, and Benton Streets, U. S. G. S., from 86 elevation points listed in Elevations in Arkansas, Vol. VIII, Arkansas Geologic Survey, from Faulkner Soil Map, U. S. Bureau of Soils, and from four alidade traverses across the county.

such a way as to form a scotch when it became necessary to rest the exhausted team. The descent of such slopes was accomplished by locking the rear wheels with chains or by dragging a log or an untrimmed sapling.[5] Outcroppings of hard sandstone on the sides of some of the hills added to the difficulty.

Streams gave trouble because there were no bridges and few fords. Many valley flats were wide, boggy when wet, and slow to dry. Some sections of the roads across these flats had to be cross-laid with poles, or split slabs, to permit the use of wagons during the winter and spring months. The ungraded condition of the roads allowed storm water to collect here and there in the wagon ruts and to remain until it evaporated, a slow process under the prevailing canopy of dense, over-hanging tree-tops.

But the trouble did not end here. On either side of the valley flats there are considerable reaches of nearly level land (Fig. 3) covered with a fine silt-loam soil underlaid in many places by nearly impervious shale at a depth of a few feet. In such places the roads became almost impassable in wet weather. The ridges, though steep, permitted a large part of the rainfall to penetrate to underlying strata and to issue as seepage along their bases,[6] where the ground was usually wet and boggy until late spring or early summer. Accordingly, the roads generally were placed well up on the slopes of the ridges, though not so high as to be seriously affected by outcroppings of rough rock.[7] In a further attempt to escape the more troublesome places, the roads generally crossed inter-ridge valleys approximately at right angles to the axes of the ridges (Fig. 3) and at places determined chiefly by fords on the streams.

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[5]This was particularly true in crossing Clifton Mountain on the way to Little Rock (Fig. 3). From an account by G. W. Dalton, who came to the county in 1851 as a lad of six.

[6]Anticlinal and synclinal folds in a sedimentary formation composed of alternate layers of sandstone and shale. See C. T. Croneis, Geology of the Arkansas Paleozoic Area (Little Rock: Arkansas Geologic Survey, 1930), particularly pp. 12 and 13 concerning the Arkansas Valley Division; cf. also Geo. T. Branner, Outlines of Arkansas Mineral Resources (Little Rock: Arkansas Geologic Survey, 1927), pp. 17-21.

[7]On some of the lower ridges, roads tended to follow the crests.

Still another hindrance to pioneer transportation was the type of equipment in use. Wagons were heavy and cumbersome and, for the most part, were drawn by oxen. Not until after the Civil War did the use of horse teams and factory-made wagons become common.[8] For several years after Conway was founded, ox teams on its streets were no uncommon sight. Equipped with wooden spindles and greased with tar, a typical wagon made a fair load for a yoke of oxen, even when empty. Unless a settler possessed an ox team of exceptional strength, he used two and sometimes three yoke on long trips, and frequently waited at the foot of a steep hill for the appearance of a second wagon so as to make use of the double team in getting his heavily loaded wagon up the hill.[9]

Finally, the difficulty of reaching a trading center was somewhat increased by differences in quality between the river towns themselves. Lewisburg and Searcy were nearer for pioneer settlers in most of the area between the Little Red and the Arkansas; but, since Little Rock was superior as a trading point, it attracted most of the trade.[10] Des Arc, because of its remoteness and small size, was used little; in fact, its restricted relationship to the area was due solely to its location on a stream of superior navigability. Lewisburg was nearest to the heart of the region, but Cadron Creek, with its wide and troublesome valley flat, in its lower course, and its bordering steep hillsides, in its upper course, was a real obstacle to its use, and the town

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[8] J. W. Kuykendall, a pioneer resident of Conway, recalls the first factory-made wagon used in the region. It was a Mitchell "Thimble Skein," and was brought to Conway in 1869 or 1870.

[9] See supra, p. 8, note 5.

[10] According to U. S. Census Reports, the populations of these centers for 1850, 1860, and 1870 were as follows:

	1850	1860	1870
Little Rock	2,167	3,727	12,380
Lewisburg	(200)	350	239
Searcy	(350)	621	874
Des Arc	(100)	(550)	(450)

Figures inclosed in parentheses are estimates.

Lewisburg, Searcy, and Des Arc were not incorporated in 1850; hence exact figures for them are not available. Estimates are made from the census figures given for the townships in which they are respectively located. Des Arc was not incorporated until after 1870, and had a population of only 548 in 1880, but it is well known that a town existed there even prior to 1850. See supra, p. 5, note 3.

never became sufficiently important to stimulate any vigorous attempt to overcome the obstacle. Searcy, to the east, was more happily located. The east-west parallelism of the ridges (Fig. 3), and their decreasing height toward the east, favored travel in that direction. Trade from the northern part of the inter-river territory under discussion, with the exception noted with reference to Batesville, tended to go to Searcy, though as years passed an increasing amount was drawn to Little Rock.

Growth in population.--The need for a trading center nearer than the river towns to most of the area between the Little Red and the Arkansas grew as the population of the area increased. In 1850, the density of population throughout the area was between two and six persons per square mile, estimated at three, whereas in 1870 it was between six and eighteen per square mile (Fig. 4), estimated at seven and one-half.[11] Thus there was an increase in two decades of about 150 per cent, most of which occurred within the decade 1850-60. This increase in population magnified the need for an interior trade center to even greater proportions than the population figures suggest because it enabled a higher standard of living to be developed through establishment of a greater number of cotton gins which in turn stimulated the growth of more cotton.

First attempts at readjustment.--As one might expect in view of such a need, attempts were made at readjustment before the founding of Conway in 1871. One line of effort was represented by the rise of inland villages which appeared, primarily, in response to the demand for certain services that could not be performed adequately by the distant river towns, e.g., blacksmithing, wood-working, cobbling for the most part, corn and wheat milling, and postal service. Small shops and mills for the performance of these services grew up at many relatively accessible points, most of them at major foci in the road pattern (Fig. 5) and, in rendering such functions, each location became a gathering place at which a barter, or "swapping" trade developed.

---

[11]The population of Conway County, which included most of what is now Faulkner County, in which Conway is located, was 3,583 in 1850 and the area was approximately 1,200 square miles. From U. S. Census Reports and D. F. Shall's map of 1855, Library of Congress. The population of Conway County was 8,112 in 1870 and the area was about 1,100 square miles (U. S. Census Reports and Shall's map of 1863, Library of Congress.

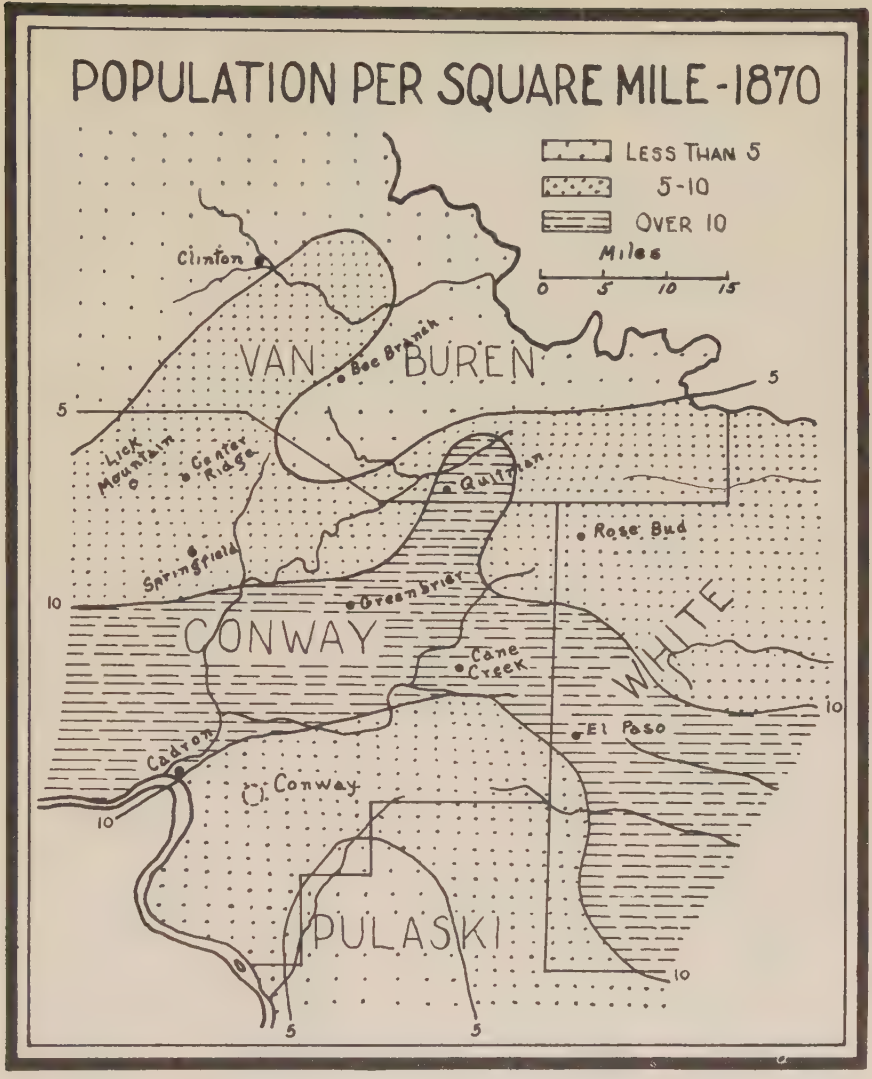

Fig. 4.--Population Map of Faulkner County and portions of surrounding Counties as of 1870. Compiled from population data by minor divisions, U. S. Bureau of the Census.

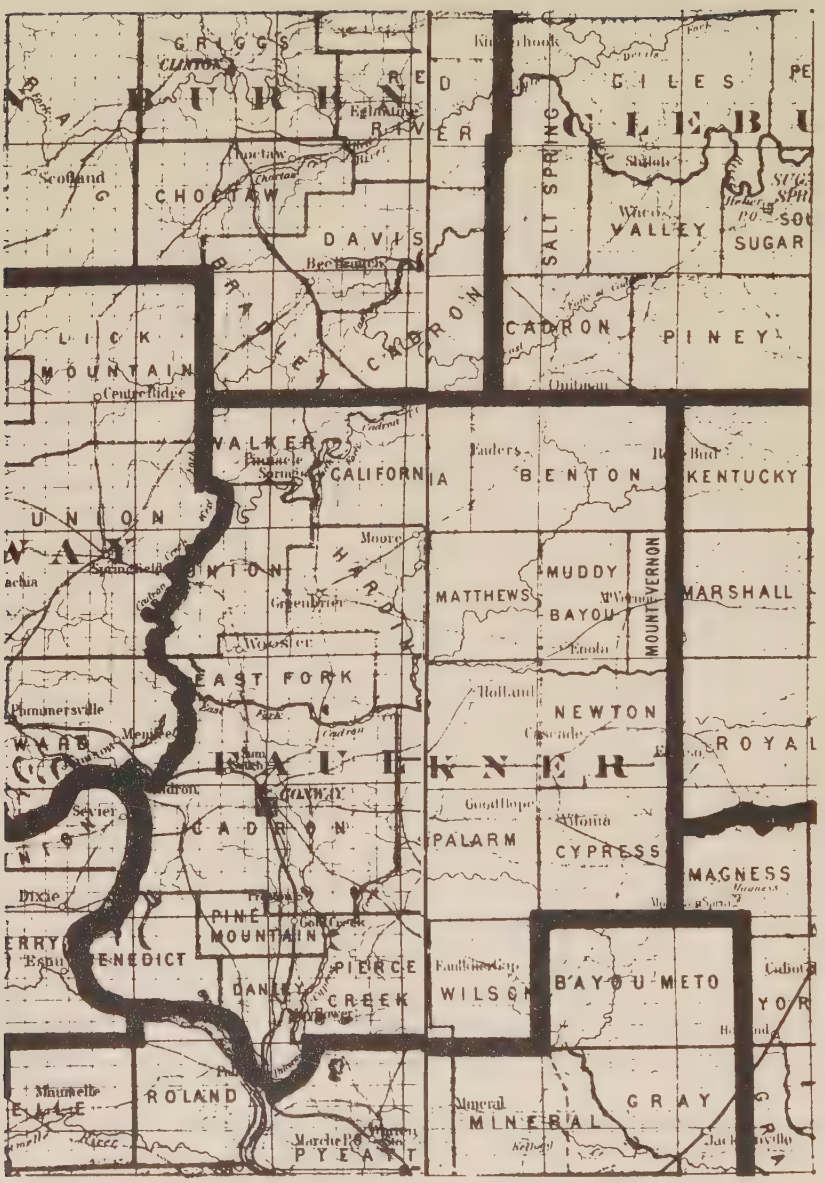

Fig. 5.--Map of Faulkner County and portions of surrounding Counties in 1884, showing towns and villages and the transportational pattern.. Reprint from Higgin's Map of Arkansas, Library of Congress, 1884.

General merchandising naturally followed at such centers, and proved profitable owing to the fact that merchants were able to reduce the cost of hauling goods by their use of equipment better than that which most farmers had and by their ability, generally, to provide full loads for the wagons both to and from the river towns. Moreover, as their businesses grew, they were able to make further reductions in the cost of goods to the consumer by their acquisition of connections with wholesalers in St. Louis, Memphis, and New Orleans. These small inland villages collected much of the trade of the individual settlers from the river towns and thus alleviated the problem of transportation until a better solution was forthcoming.[12]

A second attempt at commercial readjustment was made in the form of an improved river service. Other suitable boat-landing places were sought on the east bank of the Arkansas between Little Rock and Lewisburg and two of them were actually used for a time. One was at Red Bluff (Fig. 2), six miles southwest of Conway, and the other was at the mouth of Cadron Creek, six miles west, indicated as Cadron in Figure 2.[13] Hills and valleys prevented direct access to either of these places, however, and relatively poor landings limited their use to small boats, so that they never became rivals of the other river towns. The smaller boats made further feeble attempts to improve the service by moving up the Cadron and the Little Red when water would per-

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[12]Quitman was founded as a mill site in 1839 and was designated as a post-office site in 1848. At the time of the establishment of Conway, it was one of the leading towns of the area. From a personal account by Miss Ida Witt, a daughter of the founder of Quitman and a life-long resident of the place.

[13]Owing to the fact that the Arkansas makes a large bend at this point, it would appear that a town should have developed here. As a matter of fact, this was the site of one of the earliest towns of the state, Cadron, founded in 1818. It had promise of considerable growth for a few years, having been considered even as a site for the capitol of Arkansas Territory in 1819. Josiah H. Shinn, Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas (New York: Geneological and Historical Publishing Co., 1908), pp. 37-38.

Besides being on an outward bend of the Arkansas, it was located at a crossing place on the Cadron. The swampy nature of the East Cadron valley, however, to the northeast, cut it off from the most important part of the territory, viz., that to the north. Hence its trade was limited to that of furnishing supplies to transient west-bound home-seekers and when this trade declined, hastened by the establishment of a better crossing on the Cadron two miles above, this point ceased to function.

mit,[14] but the volume of trade was too small and the competition with larger boats to Little Rock too strong to allow these attempts to succeed.

The futility or restricted success of the measures of readjustment noted in preceding paragraphs paved the way for the founding of Conway. It was founded in response to the need for a good nearby trading center that was felt over a wide area, a need occasioned by uncompromising difficulties in transportation and one which could not be met until these difficulties were dissolved. Under the pressure of the conditions prevalent within the area, the coming of the railroad made certain the establishment of a town at some accessible point on the line.

The Site of Conway

Factors involved in its selection.--As already indicated, the most important factor in the selection of the site of Conway was the location of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad (now a part of the Missouri-Pacific System). By an early survey, this line was located to pass about four miles to the west of the present site of Conway (Fig. 6), and to cross Cadron Creek at a point near its mouth. A climb of more than 150 feet over Cadron Ridge, however, led to the choice of another location farther east in order to make use of a gap (Cadron Gap) through the ridge[15] (Figs. 3 and 6). And though the new location necessitated a large bend in the road at the gap, it brought the line several miles nearer to most of the people to be served.[16] So far as the railroad was concerned, therefore, the most favorable site in this vicinity for a town was at or near the bend.

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[14]According to the accounts of old settlers, one of these small boats steamed up the Cadron about six miles during high water and unloaded a gin on the East Fork at a point now known as King's Bridge (see Fig. 3).

[15]This gap reduced the climb by some 50 to 100 feet, but still necessitated a steep grade (see Morrilton Sheet, U.S.G.S., and Fig. 6). The grade against westward traffic was 14,000 feet long, the upper 5,000 feet of which were 1 1/2 per cent or 79.2 feet per mile. Against eastward traffic the grade was 1 per cent and was 19,000 feet long. R. C. White, Ass't Gen. Mgr., Mo. Pac. R'y Co., St. Louis, Mo.

[16]It will be recalled that the region in question lies, for the most part, to the north and east of the present site of Conway (Fig. 2).

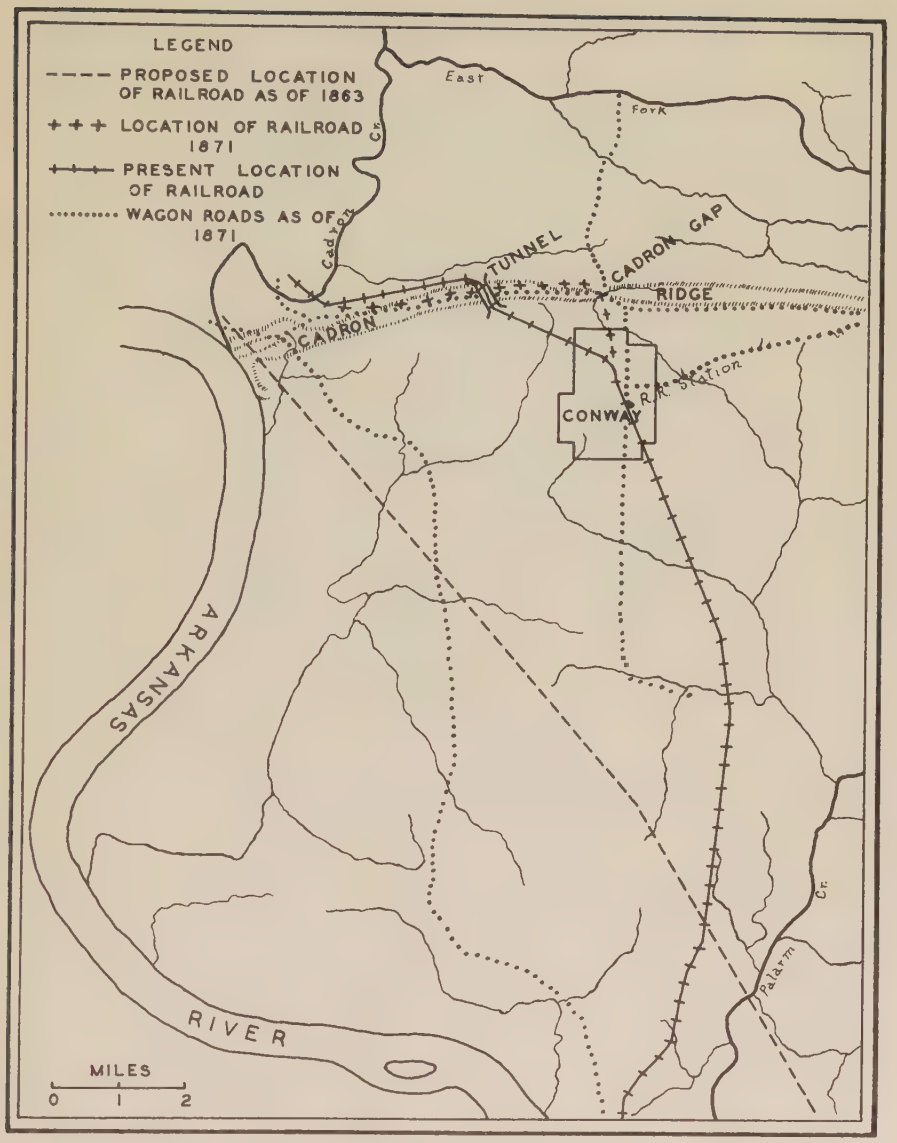

Fig. 6.--Map of Conway and vicinity, showing the relationships of the original and later locations of the railroad to Cadron Ridge. Compiled from Colton's Map of 1863 and Higgin's Map of 1884 in the Library of Congress, and a railroad map by the Arkansas Railroad Commission.

The rural road pattern also favored this site, or at least one nearer to it than that on which the town was finally built. As shown by Figure 6, the old Des-Arc-Lewisburg road approached the gap from the east along the south side of the ridge, passed through the gap, and proceeded westward along the north side. As may be seen, too, a north-south road also passed through the gap, the southern branch passing over, or near, the present site of Conway and the northern branch extending northeastward into some of the more densely populated parts of the region, though, at the time, it was scarcely usable in winter because of the difficulty of crossing Cadron Creek bottom. Thus the intersection of roads at this point, coupled with the fact that it was the only point of intersection in the vicinity, tended to favor the location of the town at or near the gap.

There were other factors, however, which strongly opposed this location. Cadron Ridge was too high and its slopes too steep to be included within the business section of a town site if it could be avoided, and there was no better site along the railroad for several miles to the west,[17] while a flattish plain, spreading away for miles toward the south, seemed almost ideal. From Figure 3 it appears that a suitable site existed just south of the ridge, a site undoubtedly superior in some respects to the one selected, but it was not used because of the influence of a railroad official, Colonel A. P. Robinson, who was granted a section of land of his own choice by the railroad company on which to build a town. He was guided in his choice by the location and size of the blocks of railroad land and by his personal preference for certain lands. As may be seen from Figure 7, he could have had land at the gap or just to the southeast of it. But in the first case there was only a half-section available and in the second case the railroad did not pass through the section. He was thus forced to select land to the south or to the west of the gap to get an entire section unless privileged to select from broken sections, a question that could not be determined.

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[17]As may be seen from Figure 6, the railroad followed the side of the ridge for four and one-half miles to the west, then passed directly from the ridge onto the flood plain of the Cadron. This section was later abandoned for a new location through a tunnel under the ridge so as to avoid the steep grade at the gap. U. S. Highway 64 now follows the old railroad right of way along this ridge.

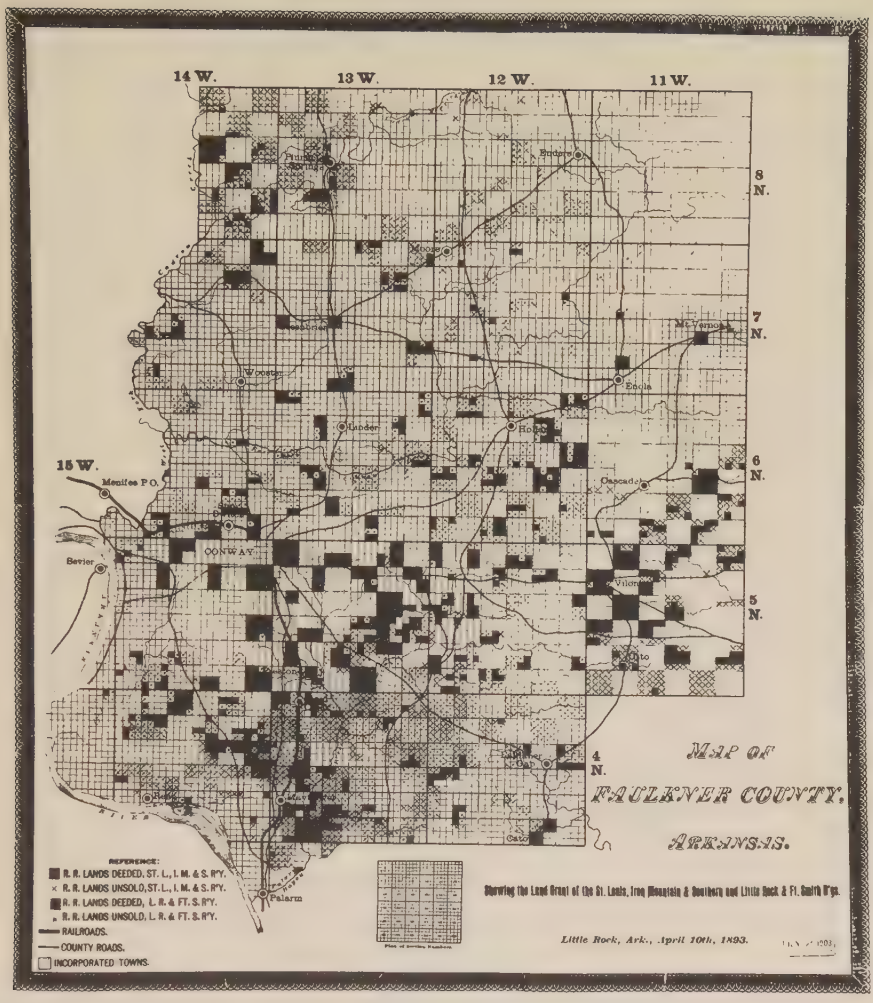

Fig. 7.--Map of Faulkner County, showing the original grants of railroad land in the County and the part that remained unsold in 1893. Reduced photostatic copy of the original in the Library of Congress.

Robinson's training and personal traits made him peculiarly responsive to certain types of natural landscapes. He loved stately oak trees, particularly those with spreading tops that were set apart from the dense forest.[18] He was a tireless hunter and especially enjoyed hunting grouse, which abounded in various parts of Arkansas. His wife, too, enjoyed the hunt. It is not surprising, then, that he was struck with the possibilities of a site one and one-half miles to the south of the gap. It was almost flat and nearly treeless, especially to the east of the tracks. To the west the plain was broken here and there by knolls on which stood scattered oaks. For a mile to the southwest the little prairie continued, harboring an abundance of grouse, turkey, and deer. Robinson chose a section of land that included these appealing features, set aside the northeast quarter, traversed by the railroad, as the town site, and, it is said, drove a stake beside the graded roadbed a little north of the center of the quarter-section to designate the location of the railroad station (Figs. 8 and 9). He set aside the south half of the section as a private hunting ground,[19] and built a home on the northern edge of it adjacent to the town site (Fig. 8). Though the railroad was not opened to traffic until later in the summer of 1871, the town was laid out, a plat was made, and lots were offered for sale (Fig. 8). The name "Conway Station" was given to it and the development of the site immediately began.

Disadvantages.--Though the site possessed the advantages of flatness, roominess, and freedom from forests, there were certain disadvantages associated with its use. Its flatness was a

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[18]His love for these oaks is indicated by a provision which he included in his grant of a site for the court house, viz., "No trees or shrubbery on said land or in the surrounding streets shall be cut, maimed or destroyed, except for the purposes of embellishment or for opening roads or paths to said buildings, or near to same, unless such trees may be decayed or dangerous" (Faulkner County Deed Records, Book A, p. 255). He also included such a stipulation in deeds to town lots, the following being a typical example: "That no tree shall be cut, maimed, or destroyed within the streets in front of the premises hereby conveyed, except by the properly constituted authorities of said town." Ibid., p. 611.

[19]As late as 1884 Col. Robinson often ran prominent notices in local newspapers threatening prosecution of any person caught hunting on his preserve (Log Cabin and Conway Democrat, issues of 1884, several of which are in possession of Frank E. Robins, Conway).

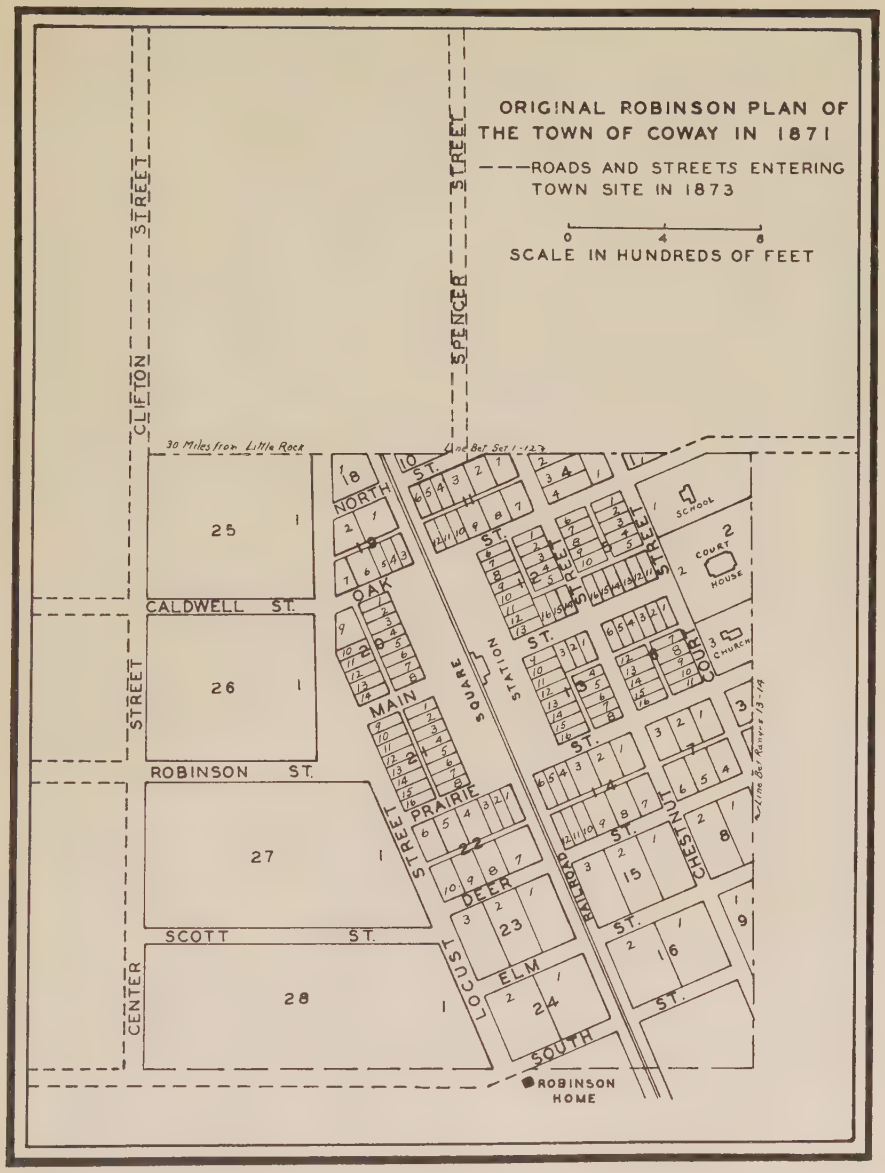

Fig. 8.--The original plan of the town of Conway as laid out by the founder, Colonel A. P. Robinson. Taken from a copy furnished by the Faulkner County Abstract Company, Conway.

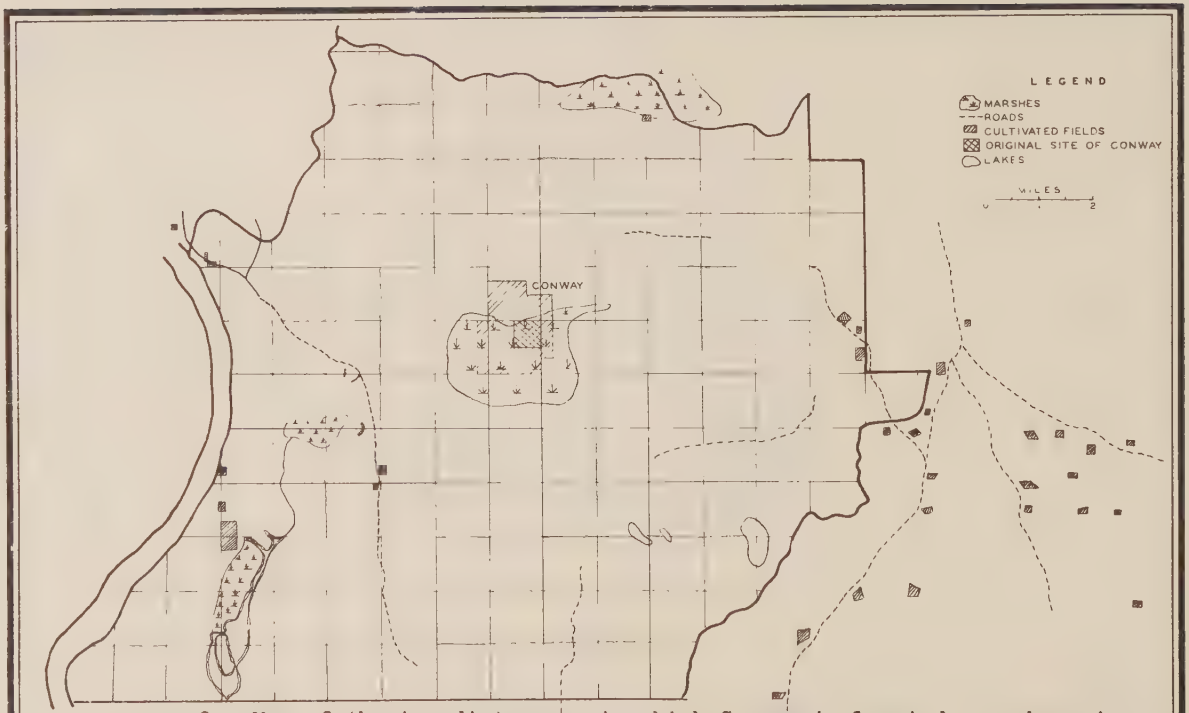

Fig. 9.--Map of the immediate area in which Conway is located, as shown in 1855 on the original land survey charts, State Land Office, Little Rock. Location of Conway is given to show the relationship of its site to the designated marsh.

hindrance to proper drainage. In fact, the "little prairie" to which Robinson was attracted had been designated by government surveyors in 1855 as a "marsh" (Fig. 9).[20] All of the original site, except a small part in the northwest corner, lay in this marsh.[21] During winter and spring the streets were veritable quagmires, while in summer and fall they were worked up into banks of dust.[22] Swarms of mosquitoes infested the place each summer and often did not disappear until well into winter; they constituted a menace which eventually called for action from the city government.[23] Additional expense was incurred in laying sewers, when the city came to provide such improvements, because the gradient of the mains had to be greater, in some places, than the slope of the surface. Basements are impracticable because of the difficulty of keeping them dry.[24] Crawfish abound in many places, and often mar the appearance of lawns with their unsightly mud chimneys.

Another disadvantage of the Robinson site was its relation to the railroad grade approaching the gap. As already indicated, this was a steep grade, difficult for a heavy train to make even when approached under full steam.[25] Stopping trains at the foot of the grade, a procedure made necessary by the location of the railroad station, rendered the later climb impossible for some of

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[20]Shallow ponds stood in many places within and near the site, some of them scarcely drying up during the entire year. Only within comparatively recent times, with the improvement of drainage and filling incident to the growth of the city, has the last of these ponds disappeared.

[21]The government surveyors evidently took no cognizance of the presence of the wooded knolls within the marsh, since they are not shown on the surveyors' maps.

[22]Oil is now commonly applied to unpaved streets in the city to mitigate the evil of dust in summer and mud in winter. Further improvement has been effected recently through the use of Federal WPA labor, with which some streets have been covered with crushed native rock and shale.

[23]According to the City Clerk, J. Wendell Henry, approximately $1,000 is now spent annually for mosquito control.

[24]This difficulty is not due entirely to poor surface drainage, however. Subsurface drainage is also poor, because of the shaly hardpan lying within a few feet of the surface.

[25]See p. 14, note 15.

them without an assistant locomotive or a siding at the top of the hill so that a train could be pulled up in parts. As a matter of fact, both expedients were tried. Prior to 1879, when a switch was built at the summit of the hill (indicated as Summit Switch on Fig. 7), a "booster" locomotive was sometimes kept at Conway or a "pusher" was provided for heavy trains out of North Little Rock (then Argenta) to the top of the hill.[26] Though this disadvantage was of little concern to any interest except the railroad company, it eventually led the latter to relocate about six miles of track and to dig a tunnel one-fourth mile long through a hard sandstone ridge so as to overcome it. (See Fig. 6 and note 17, p. 16).

The Development of Commercial and Residential Nuclei

Unconformities to original plans.--The early development of the site of Conway was marked by a considerable degree of unconformity to original plans. As may be seen from Figure 8, Main Street was laid out to focus on the railroad station and the site of the prospective court house, the two symbols of major interest at the time. The business section was expected to develop on both sides of this street, and on all lots facing the "square."[27] Main Street was accordingly made twenty feet wider than other streets of the section,[28] and lots were priced in accordance with their proximity to the junction of this street with the square.[29]

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[26] Ibid. J. H. Hartje, a pioneer resident of Conway, says that some trains had to be cut into three or four parts in "pulling this hill."

[27] Why Col. Robinson provided for the spacious public square that he did (Fig. 8) is not definitely known. Probably he was guided by two factors, viz., the prevailing practice of providing such squares on new town sites along the railroad, and his familiarity with New England villages with their public squares or "Commons."

[28] Main Street was made 80 feet wide, whereas all other streets of the business section were made only 60 feet wide, except Front Street, which was not laid out originally as a street at all. See infra, p. 23, note 32.

[29] First deeds to lots from Col. Robinson show that the original amounts paid for lots at or near the corner of Main and Front Streets were 25 to 50 per cent higher than the amounts paid for lots at or near the corner of Front and Oak Streets, one block to the north (Faulkner County Deed Records, scattered through Volumes A and B).

Certain factors, however, opposed the realization of such designs. The court house was yet an uncertainty[30] and close proximity to the station was not considered desirable enough to warrant payment of the higher prices for lots. Moreover, trade, for the most part, must come into town from the north and on the east side of the tracks. In response to a common desire for locations most nearly accessible to the incoming trade, lots around the northeast corner of the square accordingly were among the first to be sold and used as building sites (Fig. 8).[31]

Another unconformity, and one which tended to focus attention on the northeast corner of the square, was expressed in the use of Railroad Avenue as an entrance to town from the north. As shown by Figure 8, the road from this direction crossed the northern boundary of the surveyed site at the eastern end of North Street and, since no buildings were there to interfere with the movement of traffic, wagons tended, naturally, to "cut across" directly to the square, where hitching rails were provided. This tendency led to the use of Lot 10, Block 11, as a thoroughfare, and the merchants already established on Lots 9 and 11 of the same block were unwilling to have it closed by a building. Moreover, when other buildings were erected on the northern parts of these lots, they were made to face toward Lot 10, thus practically insuring the continued use of this lot as a roadway.[32] Contrary to original design, a new street was thus evolved, to be later named "Front Street," and Railroad Avenue, originally laid out as the connecting road to the north, was thus deprived of its chance

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[30]Reference to Figure 8 shows that the plat for the town was laid out in 1871, but the county was not created until nearly two years later, April 12, 1873 (Acts of the General Assembly of Arkansas, 1873, No. 44, pp. 86-90).

[31]During the years 1871-73, inclusive, two store buildings were erected on Lot 9, Block 11, one on the southeast corner facing south and the other near the middle of the lot facing west. Two stores were erected on Lot 11, Block 11, both facing south, and another was built on Lot 9, Block 12, facing west. (See Fig. 8).

[32]City and county records do not reveal that a grant of these lots to the city was ever made, but all subsequently drawn maps of the city show the omission of the numbers from these lots, designating the space as Front Street. Even now the street is only 50 feet wide, conforming to the original width of these lots.

to become anything more than an alley.[33]

The third unconformity is found in the locations of public buildings. Robinson set aside Block 2 on the east side (Fig. 8) to be donated as sites for such buildings, but it was never so used. The first two churches were built north of Oak Street; others were built later on the west side of the railroad. No school building was erected during the period, school being held in the churches, but when one was put up, it too was located on the west side. And when a court house was finally erected in 1877 it was located west of the railroad in Block 26 (Fig. 8). Higher ground and a tendency to follow expressed trends in residential development were the chief factors in this miscarriage of original plans.

Finally, the residential sections did not develop, at first, according to plans. The wooded knoll west of the railroad, Blocks 25 and 26 (Fig. 8), and the less desirable sites south of Prairie Street were expected to accommodate residences, but evidently the prices of lots on the knoll were too high and the other district too flat and marshy to attract buyers. Property on relatively high ground could be had at lower prices along what are now Spencer and Clifton streets, neither of them on Robinson's property. In fact, little active development of the knoll took place until after the erection of the court house.

The Close of the Period

The establishment of the county seat.--The establishment of the county seat in 1873 is used to mark the end of the first stage in the evolution of Conway because of its two-fold significance: it gave the town a function which was to play no small part in its future development, and it removed all uncertainty in regard to its location. While the town was yet an unincorporated village,[34] a new county was created which gave rise to the neces-

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[33]With the subsequent development of the business section on the west side of the railroad tracks, Railroad Avenue was opened up on that side as a street, and the name is now applied to this street only.

[34]As indicated above, the town was laid out in the summer of 1871, nearly two years before the creation of the county (see p. 23, note 30). County Commissioners, appointed by the Governor, met in May, 1873, and decided on a location for the county seat. Col. Robinson's grant of the site for the court house is dated

sity for designating some point within it as the seat of government. The young town was gravely concerned; not only because of the importance of the new function to its further growth, but also because of its inferiority as a site. It was not centrally located (Fig. 5), a factor which was considered important by many citizens of the county, especially in view of the existing transportational difficulties. It was unpopular because of the marshy condition of its site, being commonly dubbed a "frog pond" (Fig. 9). It was too small and too young to have gained the respect accorded to some of the older inland centers.[35] On the other hand, it was on the railroad,[36] a factor which meant that Conway would almost certainly become an important town whether or not it was designated as the county seat. And, what was probably more important at the time, it possessed a group of prominent citizens, some of whom had been attracted to the town by their connection with the railroad company or their previous associations with Colonel Robinson. As a graduate of Yale and as Chief Engineer of the railroad, Colonel Robinson was widely known and highly respected. E. M. Merriman and Harold Borland, graduates of West Point, were business and political associates of Robinson and were active and influential in civic affairs. Most of the merchants and some of the professional men of the town had earlier been business and professional men of the inland towns of the county[37] and they were able to command some support from those communities. Others were office-seeking carpetbaggers[38] aligned

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September 19, 1873 (Faulkner County Deed Records, Book A, p. 254). The town, however, was not incorporated until 1875.

[35]Particularly Greenbrier and Cane Creek (now Enola).

[36]That this factor was generally considered less significant than a central location, in the case of a county whose population is fairly evenly distributed, is shown by the fact that thirteen counties in Arkansas, traversed by railroads, do not yet have their county seats located on a railroad. Reference to any good map of Arkansas reveals this fact.

[37]R. T. Harrison (merchant) was from Mt. Vernon, Park Wilbanks (merchant) from Springfield, and Dr. J. M. Clifton from Horseshoe Mountain. Others were from similar inland places.

[38]The act named A. F. Livingston, A. D. Thomas, and J. F. Comstock as a Board of Commissioners for the county; cf. Acts of the General Assembly of Arkansas, op. cit. All three of these were carpetbaggers.

with the political forces then in control of the state.[39] Colonel Robinson himself was a Republican. This group was small in number but strong in political power, as shown by its success with the Republican legislature[40] in the creation of the new county.[41] It was equally effective now in having Conway designated as its county seat.[42] The wielding of such personal and political influence probably settled a matter that otherwise might have been held in abeyance for years.[43] In the light of these facts one well may wonder if the establishment of the town and the early impetus given to its growth were not chiefly fruitions of personal and political intrigue.

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[39] T. S. Staples, Reconstruction in Arkansas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923), pp. 234-45 and 401. Also Claude G. Bowers, The Tragic Era (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929), pp. 368-70, 420-35.

[40] The Senate of the legislature of 1873 was composed of 20 Republicans and 6 Democrats, while the House was composed of 54 Republicans and 28 Democrats. Dallas T. Herndon, Outline of Executive and Legislative History of Arkansas (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, 1922), p. 96.

[41] This legislature, the last under carpetbag rule, created nine new counties in the state. Josiah H. Shinn, History of Arkansas (Cincinnati: American Book Co., 1893), p. 221.

[42] The Act specifically designated Conway as the temporary seat of justice and empowered the Board of Commissioners to name a permanent county seat, as shown by the following clause: "The temporary seat of justice shall be located at Conway Station, and the Commissioners hereinbefore appointed shall have six months from and after the passage of this act to select the permanent seat of justice." See p. 25, note 38.

[43] The opposition did not graciously accept its defeat. On two subsequent occasions petitions were filed with the county court for an election on the location of the county seat (Faulkner County Court Record, Book A, p. 179). It is significant that the record does not show that such an election was ever held.

CHAPTER II

EARLY YOUTH

Personality

With the question of its location settled and the contest for the county seat won, Conway entered into the process of adjusting its functional activities to its environmental demands, a process that constituted the second stage in its evolution. The process began with the rapidity of a small boom and ended with temporary stagnation.

Incorporated in October, 1875,[1] Conway had reached a population of 1,028 when the census was taken in 1880. This growth is impressive when compared with that of the next ten years, during which only 179 names were added to its roster (population 1,207 in 1890).[2] During this stage (1874–1889), the town rose on its momentum to a peak unjustified by the functional demands it served.[3]

A visitor to Conway in the early '80's must have recognized immediately its pioneer character and its rural relationships, as unmistakable evidences of both were to be seen in every feature of the landscape. Particularly conspicuous were those observable in the business section. There one saw a cluster of simple one-story frame store buildings,[4] grouped around the public

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[1]There were thirty-two signers of the petition for incorporation as shown in the records of the county court--Faulkner County Court Record, Book F, p. 258--which would indicate a population of about two hundred at this time.

[2]The climax in building during this stage of the town's evolution seems to have been reached in 1884 or 1885, as shown by advertisements in local newspapers. A part of this, however, was a rebuilding program after a rather disastrous fire in the business section in 1880.

[3]Owing to the fact that fire destroyed all newspaper files of the town in 1900, more definite information on this point is lacking. Later discussions give support to the statement, however.

[4]The first brick store building was erected in 1879; by 1884, three others had been erected.

square. For the most part, they were elevated some three or four feet above the ground, leaving the space under the floor openly exposed. Most of them, too, were fronted with wooden platforms approached by wooden steps at the side or in front and covered with gently sloping planks or shingle roofs above which towered wooden facades carrying in large letters the names of the occupants. In nearly all cases, the entrances were guarded with heavy, solid wooden shutters and were flanked by large sash windows,[5] secured by stout iron bars. Creaking board walks bridged the spaces between the buildings or led away toward some residential section. The streets were unpaved and scarcely graded, a condition that permitted them to be easily worked up in mud or dust according to the weather. Finally, there were the hitching rails and posts that extended partly around the square and enclosed the public well and watering place (Fig. 8).

The life of the square gave further emphasis to the rustic, pioneer atmosphere, especially in spring and autumn. Horses, mules and oxen, some of them unhitched from their wagons, lined the hitching rails in colorful array. Other animals strained at their tethers on vacant lots, or wandered at will. Many of the horses and mules carried saddles or surcingles. Wheeled vehicles--wagons, buggies, hacks, and buckboards--filled much of the square. Men gathered in small groups or retired to some convenient place to pitch horseshoes or silver dollars. At night, campers from a distance often filled the local wagon yards, the nearby camp sites, and many of the vacant lots.

The stores were without artistic design in the display of goods. Many common articles of the rural trade occupied wall space on the front platforms or lay in confusion on the floor in front of the wooden counters. Common wares on display varied according to the season. In the spring, seed oats, in five bushel sacks, seed potatoes, also in sacks, plow tools, and other things needed in the production of a crop generally occupied prominent places. In the autumn, these items were much less conspicuous or entirely lacking. Cotton bagging and ties usually filled some

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[5]The first plate glass (ordinary large window glass) to be used in the front of store buildings was produced by M. and J. Frauenthal Co. in 1879, at which time they put up the first brick building in Conway (personal statement by Mason E. Mitchell).

prominent place in the autumn display.[6] Many other items, which showed little or no variation with the seasons, such as bulk coffee in barrels or bins, sugar in barrels, and flour in barrels, occupied floor space here and there in a general store. Indeed, such items were hardly on display but rather in storage in places convenient both to the merchant and to the customers. A generous supply of various patent medicines filled the shelves at the drug stores and generally found some space in the general stores--remedies which were widely advertised in rural newspapers and magazines.[7]

A medley of noises proclaimed a rural town of pioneer type, particularly during the rush seasons of spring and autumn, and especially on Saturdays. Anvils clanked from blacksmith shops. Wagons rumbled along the streets. Peals of raucous laughter issued from assembled groups of men in the streets or from the saloons. Animals called and charged at the hitching rails as they became impatient, hungry or thirsty. In the autumn, the hum of the nearby gin and the puffing of the steam engine that pulled it could be heard throughout the town. A rip-saw or a planing machine at one of the local lumber yards added to the din.

The residential section also reflected the youth of the town. New dwellings sprang up on every hand. Most of them were frame structures of simple design, but occasionally one was sufficiently outstanding to receive notice in the local newspapers.[8] Dealings in real estate displayed an activity that has not since been equalled, as shown by the fact that three firms were engaged

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[6]Bagging and ties used for wrapping bales of cotton at the gin were often purchased by the farmer from whatever store he chose to buy them and carried to the gin with his bale of cotton. By the late '80's or the early '90's, this practice had given way to the one now in common use, namely: wrapping for a bale of cotton is furnished by the ginner at a set price in addition to the price of the ginning.

[7]In the nine available issues of local newspapers of the decade 1880-90, more than half of the space given to advertising, other than local, was given to patent medicines or in ratio of 545 column inches to 388 inches in other foreign advertising. (From old newspaper files owned by F. E. Robins, Sr.)

[8]The following item appeared in the Conway Log Cabin of July 21, 1888: "Geo. W. Donaghey has commenced the erection of a fine residence on his property west of the Court house."

exclusively in this business in 1882[9] and by the further fact that nearly all of the attorneys of the town were giving some attention to it.[10] Three new additions were opened up during the period to care for the demands for residential expansion (Figs. 10 and 11). A new school house had to be provided and the old frame court house built in 1877 was replaced by a modern structure--a building that for many years was the pride of the county.[11] The principal streets received much-needed attention and ditches were dug or enlarged to drain the stagnant ponds or to facilitate run-off after a heavy rain.[12] These activities, as well as those observed in the business section, reflected a hope and confidence becoming the spirit of a rising young town.

Finally, many aspects of the social atmosphere of the town accentuated its rural and pioneer character. Drinking was common among nearly all groups. Saloons occupied the most prominent places on the down-town streets and enjoyed a wide patronage, even by church members.[13] Gambling was rife, some of the saloons providing the requisite facilities.[14] Public dances, frequently

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[9]A. P. Robinson, J. M. A. Hemsteger, and Lincoln and Pollard, as shown by advertisements in the Log Cabin and the Conway Democrat, during the year 1882.

[10]P. H. Prince, Harrod and Harrod (changed to Jas. H. Harrod in September, 1882), Bruce and Cox, and J. W. Duncan carried ads in the local newspapers as attorneys and real estate. Of course, some of this activity in real estate was due to prospecting.

[11]The replacement at the time was occasioned by heavy fire damage to the old building in 1888. The new building was completed in 1890 and served the county continuously for nearly half a century. It was torn down upon the completion in 1936 of a much finer one now in use.

[12]The first of these ditches was dug along the west side of the railroad tracks through the heart of the town and even now remains as an open ditch throughout most of its course.

[13]As previously indicated, the saloon appeared early in Conway but its popularity is further emphasized by the fact that by 1884 there were five such places under license, two of them occupying corner positions at Oak and Front Streets. For records of licenses see Faulkner County Court Records, Book C.

[14]Gambling was never openly permitted, but no serious effort to stop it was made until 1889. A check of the indictment records at the court house reveals the fact that only twelve indictments for gambling were returned by the grand jury from 1881 to 1886, inclusive, and most of these never came to trial. In 1887 there were ten indictments and in 1888 there were six, while

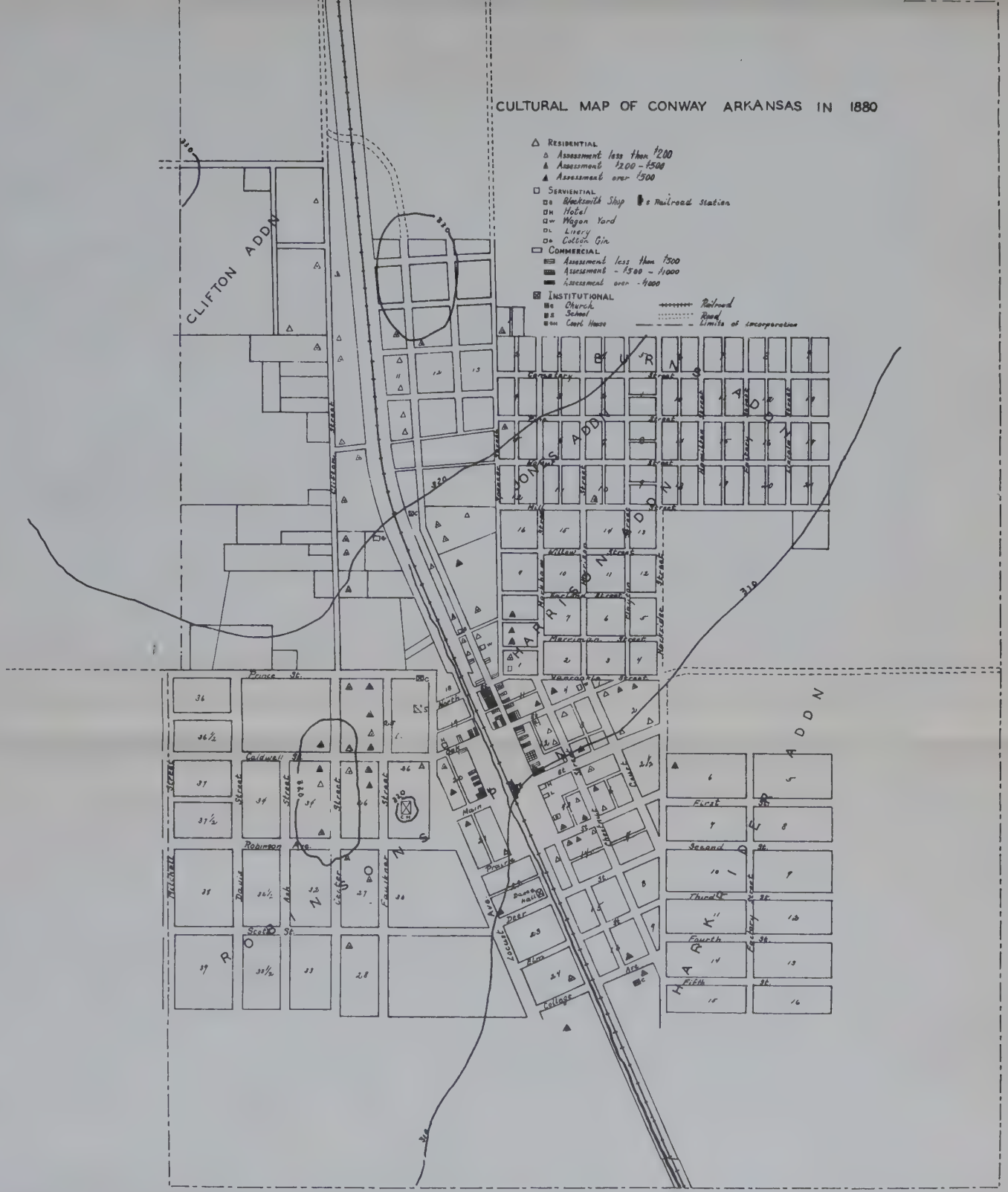

Fig. 10.--Cultural Map of Conway showing land utilization in 1880 with elevation contours entered at intervals of ten feet. Location and classification of cultural forms determined from Faulkner County Tax Records.

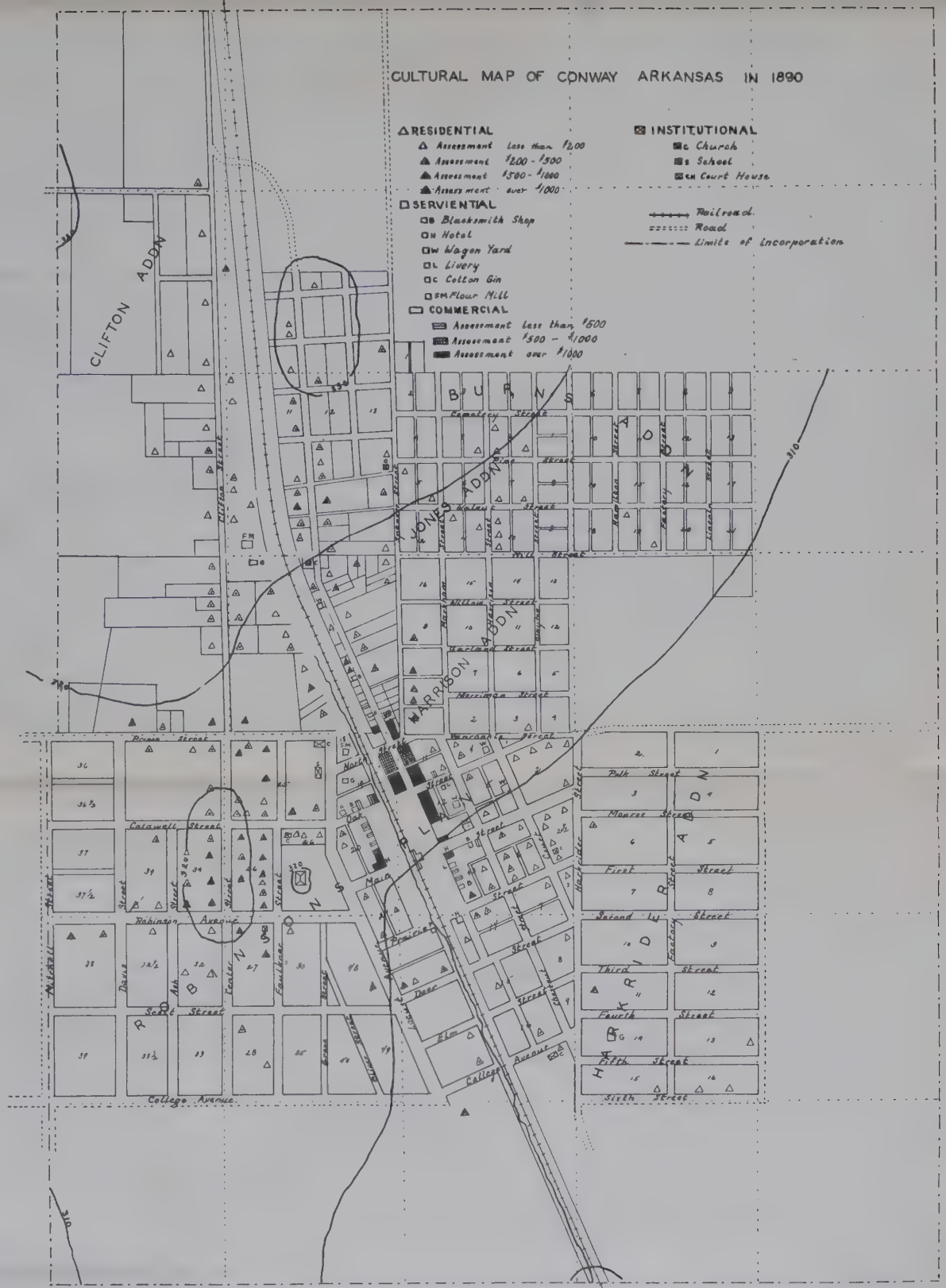

Fig. 11.--Cultural Map of Conway showing land utilization in 1890 with elevation contours entered at intervals of ten feet. Location and classification of cultural forms determined from Faulkner County Tax Records.

held at the dancing pavilion (Fig. 10) on the nearby picnic grounds[15] were popular and horse racing, commonly held on a local improvised track and long since outlawed, commanded favor and respect.[16] Thus in the early '80's, when the landscape of the young town was most suggestive of early youth, the panorama of functional forms, the expressions of functional activities, and the complexion of the social atmosphere all gave assurance of its rural and pioneer status.

Functional Activities

In proceeding to an analysis and interpretation of the activities represented in the cultural landscape of Conway during the period under discussion, attention is called to the fact that the general characteristics as presented were not peculiar to this town. The cultural landscape of almost any young town of Arkansas at that time portrayed many if not most of the features herein described. The problem of interpretation, therefore, is less concerned with justification of the characterization given than it is with an account and explanation of the relationships to the environmental complex expressed in the performance of more or less commonplace functions.

Four types of functional activities are recognized in this state of the evolution of Conway: namely, commercial, servi-ential (including manufactural), residential, and institutional. Their development in areal distribution is shown in Figures 10 and 11, and a detailed analysis and interpretation of each type is given in the complete dissertation. The characteristics of each type of activity and of each enterprise within a given type reflect the fact that Conway at this time (1874–1889) was a youthful, pioneer community, a market town and supply base for a farming area then undergoing rapid development.

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in 1889 there were twenty-six. This increase in the number of indictments does not reflect an increase in gambling but rather a growing sentiment against it.

[15] This pavilion was built by Colonel Robinson in 1878 and operated until 1881, when it was donated to the Catholic Sisters of Mercy for a Convent and parochial school.

[16] A flat stretch of land in John Ingram's pasture one-half mile south of town was used for a race track.

Close of the Period

The halt in growth.--The rapid expansion of the period, portrayed in all functional expressions, indicates a pioneer stage of evolution. In typical pioneer fashion, too, the trend was eventually halted by its tendency to overexpansion. This check in growth took place in the later part of the decade 1880-90, and definitely connoted a transition from a more or less unstable pioneer state to that of a more securely established community. How far the transition had gone by 1889 cannot be told with exactness, but the occurrence of two important events of that year indicates that the transition was about complete by that time, hence the use of this year to designate the close of the period.

Quantitative data are unavailable to show exactly the extent to which expansion was halted, but judging from the number of firms listed as advertisers in local newspapers, supplemented by statements of old residents, it is almost certain that there were more business concerns in operation in 1884 or 1885 than there were in 1889 or 1890.[17] Moreover, the increase of only 179 in population during the decade indicates a state of stagnation for all or part of the decade.

Aggravating conditions in the rural area.--Aside from the tendency of Conway to expand beyond its functional requirements, as noted, and thus have its development checked in any case, there were certain aggravating trends within the supporting rural area. The first was a decline in the rate of development. While rural development continued throughout the period, the rate of growth was not steadily maintained. For instance, the amount of land cleared during the decade 1890-1900 was actually less than the

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[17] The business houses that closed out during the decade 1880-1890, so far as could be determined, were: Davis and Hoss Drug Store closed out in 1882; Lige Clifton, meat market, in 1884 or 1885; M. Groves, Jeweler, in 1885 or 1886; F. M. Dickens, General Merchandise, 1885 or 1886; J. S. Jones, General Merchandise, 1886 or 1887; W. C. Jones and Co., General Merchandise, 1887 or 1888; Grizzard and Gist, Gen. Mdse., succeeded by Griffing and Witt in 1884; succeeded by L. B. Griffin and Co., in 1888; Van Ronkel's Dry Goods, 1886 or 1887; J. N. Walton and Co., Gen. Mdse, 1885; Thos. Walker, Groceries, succeeded by Martin Bros. in September, 1882, who in turn were succeeded by Martin and Harton in 1884 and Jesse Witt, Groceries, in 1885 or 1886. Apparently only one new business (W. D. Cole and Co. in 1887) was established to replace those that were closed out, except in the cases of those noted.

amount cleared in the preceding decade. Furthermore, the exploitative process of land utilization in vogue was beginning to show itself by the close of the period in depleted soils[18] and reduced yields. In consequence, a higher proportion of the cultivated land was devoted to cotton and this procedure in turn increased the rate of soil erosion. As the process continued, more and more land inevitably was forced out of use, especially in the hilly sections of the northern part of the county. In fact, not a few farmers by 1890 were finding it profitable to relinquish their old farms to the credit merchants and to take up new lands elsewhere.

A second trend which helped to check the continued expansion of business in Conway was the growth in the proportion of negroes in the population of the county. At the beginning of the period, there were few negroes in Faulkner County. There were never many slaves brought to the county and most of them were on plantations in the Arkansas River valley, a comparatively small area. In 1870, there were only 630 negroes in all of Conway County, and 470 of them were in two townships not included in Faulkner County when it was formed.[19] A conservative estimate places the negro population of the county in 1870 at not more than 100. By 1880, however, the number had increased to 1,418, and by 1890 to 3,348. Many of these negroes were brought into the area in the late '80's by credit merchants of Conway who had been forced to take over some of the worn-out farms to satisfy mortgages, farms which had become so run down as to be unable to provide a living for a white family and liquidate the mortgage at the same time. Accordingly, several hundred negroes were imported from South Carolina and Georgia and placed as tenants on worn-out farms. Settlements or communities of them sprang up in various parts of the county. The presence of these negroes, since they accepted a much lower standard of living than the average white farmer, and since they were placed on low production lands, certainly was not conducive to further expansion in trade. In fact,

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[18] See E. W. Hilgard, Soils (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1906), pp. 218-19; and J. Russell Smith, North America (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1925), p. 252.

[19] Howard and Welborn, U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census. Population of Minor Divisions, Arkansas, Conway County.

their restricted contribution to trade was based upon their use of marginal lands which, for the most part, would otherwise have remained idle. In brief, the growth in negro population tended to nullify the effect of growth in white population by the close of the period.

Still another element in the population contributed little to the growth of business in Conway at this time. There were about 300 foreign-born residents in the county in 1880, representing a total population of nearly 1,000. These were immigrants from Europe, most of them from Germany, Switzerland, and eastern France. Cheap railroad lands had attracted enough of these Catholic immigrants to Conway by the middle '70's for them to establish a church there, and this served as an additional incentive to others. Practically without exception, they were poor peasants, unable to spend much money in the satisfaction of their needs. They entered immediately into a subsistence type of agriculture on some of the poorer and therefore cheaper lands to be had within reach of their church. Most of this element, however, arrived prior to the halt in expansion here under discussion, coming, for the most part, in the late '70's and early '80's; hence they had little direct effect upon the decline, except possibly to hasten its appearance. But the presence and status of these people was somewhat adverse to trade in that, like the negroes, they tended to lower the average amount spent in the stores. Later, their frugality and industry contributed lasting benefits to Conway.

The abolition of saloons.--While this interruption in the growth of Conway marked the passing of a pioneer period, its close was signalized by two outstanding events in the evolution of the town. The first of these was the abolition of the saloon in 1888. The steadily growing influence of the more progressive and civic-minded element in the town's population had gathered enough strength by 1888 to assert its will in the face of opposing forces which had dominated the town from its beginning and which had never before been seriously challenged. The first test was over the banishment of the saloon and it precipitated a bitter conflict which doubtless would have been lost by the anti-saloon element but for the inspiring leadership of a young minister, E. A. Tabor. Stated in the words of an observer, "War it was--bitter fighting in which no quarter was asked or given--fighting in which, before the victory was achieved, more than one citizen

was slain."[20] The winning of this conflict closed all saloons within a three-mile radius of the public-school house on the last day of the year, 1888. This accomplishment strengthened the moral tone of the young town and fortified it for its next and final achievement of the period.

The acquisition of Hendrix College.--The second event which marks the close of one period and the advent of another was the acquisition of Hendrix College. This was a Methodist institution with a state-wide following and although its location in Conway was not officially designated until March, 1890, the expression of confidence and determination with which the campaign for funds was successfully carried out in 1889, again under Tabor's leadership, signified a turning point in the evolution of the town. It had rather suddenly obtained a reputation for culture and progressiveness that was recognized and respected throughout the state; its citizens had become imbued with a feeling of pride and assurance that enabled the town to face the future with confidence.

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[20]Frank E. Robins, "Edward A. Tabor and his Triennium in Conway," Daily Log Cabin Democrat, May 25, 1931.

CHAPTER III

ADOLESCENCE

Personality

Following the period of temporary stagnation in the late '80's, Conway experienced rejuvenation during the next decade and continued to show a high degree of prosperity throughout the ensuing stage of its development (1889-1920). There are several evidences, both apparent and hidden, to indicate its prosperous trend. In the first place, it had a healthy growth in population, rising from 1,207 in 1890 to more than 4,500 in 1920.[1] This is an increase during the period of approximately 275 per cent and represents an average increase for each successive decade of approximately 70 per cent.[2] The conclusion that this rate represented a healthy growth is justified by comparison with the rate of growth of the surrounding rural territory, which was only 44 per cent for the entire period and averaged a little less than 10 per cent for each of the decades.[3] By 1910, the town had acquired a population of 2,794 and had thus attained the status of a city of the second class, a status that meant added functions[4] and prestige.

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[1] In 1910, 2,794, and in 1920, 4,554. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. I, Arkansas (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), p. 23.

[2] The percentage increase in population from 1890 to 1900 was 65 per cent; 1900-10, 4 per cent; and 1910-20, nearly 100 per cent. Computed from U. S. Census Reports.

[3] Population of the county in 1890 was 18,343; in 1900, 20,780; 1910, 23,708; 1920, 27,681. U. S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit., p. 5. Estimated for 1917, 25,800. The rate of increase for the rural section was: 1890-1900, 9.6 per cent; 1900-1910, 11.3 per cent; 1910-20, 10.5 per cent; average, 9.8 per cent.

[4] A census was taken in the summer of 1905 to determine whether the city had reached this status and it showed a population of 2,611. City mail delivery and some changes in governmental functions were inagurated (Log Cabin Democrat, Aug. 17, 1905).

In the second place, the business section made notable expansion during the period, both in size and quality. The number of buildings in the section increased from about forty to about eighty-five (Figs. 11 and 12), and the assessed valuation of real estate within the section expanded from $44,000 in 1890 to about $240,000 in 1920, or more than five-fold.[5] Frame buildings, which characterized the business section of the previous period, gave way to substantial brick structures, many of which were two stories high. Floors were lowered to the level of the sidewalk and awnings were added to the fronts of most of the buildings in place of the covered porches previously used. Plate glass replaced the old sash windows. Board walks gave way to concrete or stone walks. Streets were well graded and crushed rock was applied to overcome the mud and dust with which the town had been afflicted. By the close of the period, all downtown streets were paved. The interiors of most of the stores underwent decided improvement. Modern fixtures were added. Goods were arranged more attractively and many show windows were decorated to enhance the appearance of displays. Stores exhibited a wide variety of types. Some of the general stores evolved into department stores,[6] while the presence of an increasing number of other types gave evidence of continued differentiation in the retail establishments.

Residential districts, too, gave evidence of a thriving town. The average home of the period was larger in size and more substantially built than that of the previous period, as shown by the fact that the average assessed valuation of homes rose from $262 in 1890 to $588 in 1915.[7] Moreover, a greater degree of dif-

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[5]Computed from Faulkner County Tax Books for the respective years. This includes only the lots in the business section occupied by some kind of a business house, so far as could be determined from the tax books. Total assessments of occupied business lots in 1916 were only about $160,000.

[6]In 1915 there were five stores departmentalized to the extent of having two or more entrances. These were: Frauenthal and Schwarz, W. M. Harrell and Co., S. G. Smith and Co., B. T. Deal and Co., and the Fair Store.

[7]These figures were obtained from the Faulkner County Tax Books. By checking the assessed valuation of each town lot and the ownership of lots, it was possible to determine to a fair degree of accuracy the exact location and assessed valuation of each residence in town. According to such methods there were 191 residences within the corporate limits of the town in 1890. Ninety-

ferentiation was expressed between residential districts, as may be seen from the maps, Figures 11 and 12. A segregated district for negroes developed more or less unconsciously. Some sections experienced decided deterioration, while others enjoyed notable improvement. More attention was given, generally, to the beautification of residential grounds. Yard fences, common in an earlier day, practically disappeared. Streets were graded and drained and flagstone or concrete sidewalks were extended throughout most of the residential sections. Pavements were appearing at the close of the period.

Public utilities were introduced and gave expression to a public confidence in the future of the town. A modern telephone exchange was installed.[8] Water mains and sewers were laid.[9] Near the opening of the period, electric lights were extended to all parts of the town and before its close a white way system was provided for the business section.[10] A small fire truck was added to the fire department.

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four, or 49 per cent, of these were assessed at less than $200 each; 65, or 34 per cent, were assessed at between $200 and $500; 30, or 16 per cent, were assessed at over $500; and only 2, or 1 per cent, were assessed at over $1,000. The assessed valuation of the land is not considered in these figures. In 1915, which year serves as a better basis on which to make the comparison than the year 1920 for the obvious reason that it avoids taking into account the inflation of prices in 1920, there were 593 residences within the corporate limits of the town. One hundred and thirty-one, or 21 per cent, were assessed at less than $200; 272, or 46 per cent, were assessed at between $200 and $500; 154, or 25 per cent, were assessed at between $500 and $1,000; and 46, or 8 per cent, were assessed at more than $1,000. A study of the tax records reveals, too, that the trend of the ratio between the assessed and real values was downward. That is, there was generally less disparity between the assessed and true values in 1890 than there was in 1915. Of course real values advanced during the time, and from a check of the assessed value of vacant lots in parts of the town where residential development made little progress during the time, land values advanced from 60 to 100 per cent and it is doubtful that construction costs for residences advanced any more than that. But even with a rise of 100 per cent, the average value of a home was still higher in spite of the effort to keep assessments down.

[8] This was a local company organized in 1895.

[9] Water mains and the first sewer lines were laid in 1910.

[10] Electric lights were installed in 1896 by a private company made up largely of Little Rock men, and lights were provided for a few hours during the first part of the night. All-night service was not established until Sept. 1, 1905; and 24-hour service was not started until 1910. Log Cabin Democrat, issues of July 27, 1905; Sept. 7, 1905; and Aug. 1, 1910.

Fig. 12.--The cultural pattern of Conway in 1915. Location and classification of cultural forms determined from Faulkner County Tax Records. Elevation contours are entered at intervals of ten feet.

The moral atmosphere of the town underwent marked improvement. Most of the lawless element which had largely dominated the town during its pioneer days disappeared. Church membership increased at a rate that exceeded the growth in population of the town.[11] Churches also increased in number; eight denominations were represented in the town by the end of the period, whereas only five were in existence during the previous period.[12]

Finally, two more colleges appeared and an atmosphere developed that caused the town often to be styled the "Athens of Arkansas."

The period of adolescence in the evolution of Conway is thus characterized as one in which prosperity illuminated the landscape and as one in which a growing confidence, culture and refinement permeated its people.

Readjustments of Established Functions

Readjustments of one kind or another in established functions marked the period of adolescence in the evolution of Conway. The number and the size of retail stores increased notably, as already indicated. Specialization and departmentalization in retail merchandising became a strong tendency. The establishment of several exclusive wholesale houses was indicative not only of increasing specialization in trade but also of the greater ascendency of Conway among the communities of the region. The readjustments in serviential functions likewise involved increasing specialization. Developments in manufacturing were less noteworthy, as should be expected, and the small mills and shops of the city continued to reflect, almost wholly, fundamental needs of the rural service area. A rapid growth in trade and a moderate growth in industry caused both readjustment and expansion of the residential pattern

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[11]Membership of the Protestant churches for the period could not be obtained prior to 1900, but for the Methodist and Baptist churches, which probably represent about two-thirds of the total white Protestant church membership, the figures were: 457 for 1900 and 1552 for 1920, an increase of about 240 per cent; whereas the town's increase for the same period was a little less than 100 per cent.

[12]The churches of the town established prior to 1890 were Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Catholic; during the period there were added the Episcopal, Nazarene, and Church of Christ.

of the city--changes stimulated also by the advent of three colleges in Conway.

A comparison of Figures 11 and 12 will reveal readjustments and developments in the functional use of land within the city during the period, a subject treated in systematic detail in the complete dissertation.

Development of a New Function

Particularly conspicuous in the life of Conway during this period was the development of its role in higher education. The establishment of a college in Conway at the very beginning of the period was itself significant, as already pointed out. This college was followed by a second in 1893,[13] and the third appeared in 1908.[14] Buildings, considered imposing at the time, set in large campuses that soon developed a park-like appearance, were enough to attract the immediate attention of any visitor, and now that there were three of them, a number which no other city or town in Arkansas could boast, favorable comment arose in all parts of the state and soon the well-meant title "Athens of Arkansas" was bestowed upon the city. The patronage of the colleges was a conspicuous feature, too, in that it consisted of adults drawn from all parts of the state and even from beyond its borders, and further, in that it constituted an important source of income to local merchants. Finally, the cultural atmosphere which the colleges gave to Conway not only aroused a local consciousness of the worth of these institutions but noticeably affected the city's personality.

The development of this educational function is accounted for in several ways. First was the general recognition given to the value of higher education by the organized churches. Here was a type of training which furnished the leadership on which continued growth of the churches largely depended. Colleges therefore sprang up in many places where these church denominations had a strong following. Since religious training was an essential

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[13] Central College for women. A Baptist institution established in 1893.

[14] A state institution for the training of teachers known as the Arkansas State Normal School. It was little more than a high school to begin with, but by 1917 had become standardized as a two-year Normal School.

part of the curricula of these schools, and since creedism or dogma was a distinctive attribute of the leading denominations in the South,[15] one denomination could not trust the training of its prospective leaders to a school supported by another denomination. Hence there was a strong tendency toward the establishment of many small denominational colleges within an area where a smaller number could have adequately met all regional needs. Moreover, the constituencies of separate administrative units of the same denomination were jealous of their prestige and thus each group tended to establish a college in its own territory.[16] Any town in Arkansas, therefore, which could and would provide a site and enough money to build a suitable building could almost be assured of getting some denomination to found a college within its borders.[17] Methodists and Baptists, being the strongest two groups and moreover about equal in strength, were active rivals, so that almost any noteworthy move made by one group would be matched by the other. Thus the success of the Methodists in obtaining a college for Conway stimulated a determined effort on the part of the Baptists to establish one there for themselves and it followed in only three years.

It should not be understood, however, that the establishment of these colleges in Conway was brought about by forces entirely from the outside. These forces merely provided an opportunity for local factors to express themselves. Conway was centrally located in the state and any effort to centralize the

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[15]Particularly the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, and Nazarene.

[16]Three Methodist Conferences in Arkansas in 1889 agreed at first to establish and support one Methodist College, but fought bitterly over its location. When on the fifty-first ballot Conway had won the location of Hendrix by a single vote, the disappointed towns of Searcy and Arkadelphia in the other conferences also established Methodist colleges. James A. Anderson, Centennial History of Arkansas Methodism (private publication, distributed by the author), pp. 400-402.

[17]Clarksville and Morrilton were bidders for the location of Hendrix and when they were outbid by Conway they proceeded to establish colleges of their own. The one at Clarksville developed into Cumberland College, a Presbyterian institution now the College of the Ozarks. The Morrilton School failed to get support and soon died (ibid., p. 407).

educational function must have recognized this fact.[18] It was on a railroad but was not a large city, which circumstance was considered to be a wholesome influence. Through the abolition of the saloon and through efforts to improve social conditions in other ways, Conway had acquired a reputation for culture and morals somewhat more favorable than that of most of its competitors.[19] And finally, the power of personal leadership induced the local groups to exert themselves, perhaps even beyond their means, in order to meet competitive bids. All told, the town, with a population of only 2,000 in 1900, had raised $139,000 by 1907 as gifts to secure the location there of three colleges. This amount was equal to nearly half the assessed valuation of all real estate in Conway in 1905.[20]

The Normal School, founded in 1908, being a state institution, was not affected in its establishment by the activities of religious groups, but was the outgrowth of a general rise in interest in teacher training, largely attributable to the activities of J. J. Doyne, who was then State Superintendent of Public Instruction and who was to become the first president of the new institution. The location of the school in Conway was accomplished, however, by the same means as those which operated in the location there of its predecessors.

The growth of the educational function was traceable to forces external to Conway, although it drew local support. The rise in demand generally for college-trained church leaders, expressed in higher salaries to pastors by the more prominent churches, accounted in large part for the growth at Hendrix,[21] since it was only nominally open to women until about 1912.[22]

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[18]In the location of Hendrix College one member of the committee from North Arkansas Conference favored Van Buren in the western part of the state but it, with Clarksville, was abandoned because it was not centrally located. The Baptists named their institution "Central" because of its location.

[19]Minutes of the North Arkansas Conference 1889-1900. Archives, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas.

[20]All real estate in Conway in 1905 was assessed at $301,890.

[21]From 125 in 1900 to 365 in 1920 (Office of the Registrar, Hendrix College).

[22]That is, no inducements, such as housing facilities, were offered to women until about this time.

Church leaders and field agents helped materially to spread a belief in the superiority of the general training offered by the small denominational college,[23] and thus undoubtedly added to the enrollments at Hendrix and Central. Finally the improvements in plants, equipment, and faculties contributed to the prestige of these institutions and doubtless added further to the enrollment. However, this was a reciprocal relationship in that the increased enrollment affected the growth in plant and operation costs.

In the case of the Normal School, the general rise of interest in teacher training, as stated above, the relatively low cost of attendance,[24] and the attractiveness of the Licentiate of Instruction diploma, which was a high ranking state teachers' license and good for six years, were major factors in its growth. And it should be noted finally that all three of the colleges experienced a healthy growth because of the prominence of the men selected to head them, although the direct effects of this factor cannot be measured.[25]

Thus the period of adolescence was noted for the rise of Conway's second major function, one which by 1920 not only had made its imprint upon the landscape but also had definitely modified the personality of the city.

Close of the Period

As already indicated (Foreword), the rapid changes in almost all activities of the city incident to the World War marked a transition period. In view of the expressed trends in the environmental complex, the city doubtless would presently have reached the stage in its evolution that it attained in 1920, even had the war not occurred; but in keeping with the trend over the

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[23] During summer vacation months most of the faculty members of the denominational schools became field agents. In the summer of 1900 six members of a faculty of ten at Central were employed to solicit students (Log Cabin Democrat, July 31, 1900).

[24] Fees at the Normal School were only $8.00 per year, as compared to $60.00 per year at Hendrix or Central. Fine Arts students at Central paid an additional fee in accordance with the nature of the course.

[25] Proof of this statement is hardly necessary, but the presidents of all three schools were recognized as outstanding leaders among their respective constituencies.

entire Southland the evolving process was greatly accelerated by the war.

In fact, all functions by this time had apparently reached their maximum state of efficiency and further material advancement awaited changes in the environmental pattern. With the attainment of maximum growth by the rural area during the period and apparent attainment of maximum growth at the colleges a few years later, Conway entered a period of comparative rest, a state that characterizes the present period of its evolution.

CHAPTER IV

MATURITY

Stabilized Relationships

The final stage in the evolution of Conway was ushered in by the tide of inflation incident to the World War and was followed immediately by the downward plunge of the autumn of 1920, which brought virtual stagnation in all lines of activity during 1921.[1] A fair cotton crop in 1922, however, and a rising price for cotton from 1922 to 1924[2] allowed the activities of the city to attain pre-war status by the end of 1924.[3] Aside from the low ebb of the depression years of 1930-35, the general conditions since 1924 may be considered as indicative of the normal trend of the period and may serve as a basis for its interpretation.

Conway is characterized as mature at this stage of its evolution because the exploitation of local resources has, in the aggregate, reached its maximum degree of returns under the present types of adjustment. Opportunity of further growth by established means, which in the past have helped to tide the major activities of the city over temporary set-backs, no longer exists. All activities now seem to be engaged in a battle to maintain their present status in the face of a perplexing future.

In defense of the characterization here made, it must be remembered that limitations of experience preclude an appraisal of the adjustments that ultimately may be made in the search for

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[1] W. L. Thorp, Business Annals (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1926), p. 132.

[2] In 1921, 11,508 bales were produced in the county at a price below 17¢; 15,529 bales were produced in 1922 at a price of 23¢, as of Dec. 1 (Arkansas Annual Crop Reports, Nos. 5 and 6, U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics).

[3] In 1924, 25,531 bales were produced, whereas the ten-year average from 1920 to 1930 was 21,414. The price in this year was 25¢, as of Dec. 1 (ibid., No. 7). Statements from local merchants also bear out the assertion

economic advancement. These experiences accumulate from generation to generation and give new meanings and values to environmental factors. Hence it is to be expected that experiences yet to be gained from individual experimentation and from experimentation by agencies established for that purpose will inevitably lead to other functional adjustments within the city. But interpretation here is concerned only with visible trends. Changes in techniques have taken place from time to time during the period, but no changes as to types of activity or as to their major significance have yet occurred. Environmental factors themselves have been subject to fluctuations which naturally affect the stability in volume of business of the city, but these vicissitudes have not as yet disturbed the fundamental relationships between the activities of the city and the environmental complex. It is this stabilized relationship that supports the characterization of the city as mature.

The personality complex, as described in the Foreword, was largely attained by 1925, when the immediate effects of the World War had passed. Retail functions since that time have indicated no further upward trend, except for the inflationary rise of 1928-29, which did not reflect local conditions. In fact, some of the larger businesses of the city have shrunk in volume during the period, or have disappeared. Moreover, the evidence gathered supports the belief that the aggregate volume of business of the city is now stationary or even declining after the effects of the depression have been duly discounted.[4]

Wholesaling also reflects a stabilized condition, although it increased in volume between 30 and 40 per cent from 1920 to 1930, according to estimates of the wholesalers. But this increase was the result of some territorial expansion during the time and to a disproportionate increase in the consumption of groceries, to which the wholesale trade in Conway is limited. Such possibilities are now exhausted. In fact, wholesalers do not expect that the industry will again reach the 1928-1929 level

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[4]It is significant that there are thirteen ground-floor vacancies in the city now (1937), with the addition of only two business houses since 1925; and that other ground-floor space, chiefly in former store buildings, has been appropriated by non-commercial functions, such as public utilities, pressing parlors, beauty and barber shops, amusement halls, and cafes.

soon, but rather that some readjustment of the function to a lower volume of business must be made.[5]

Manufacturing reflects the same general condition of relative stability. A creamery represents the only expansion of the industry during the period,[6] and this addition does not equal the loss of the cotton-seed oil mill which was closed and dismantled in 1935. All other manufacturing plants have remained in about the same condition as that which they had attained by the close of the previous period.

Serviential functions have likewise undergone very little change during the present period, with the exception of those of automobile service stations; and the fact that many of these have changed hands from one to several times each within recent years indicates that the saturation point is about reached for this function. Plumbing has had considerable increase as a result of the coming of natural gas in 1927 and, of course, must continue to be more active than it was before that time; but the most active period has long since been passed and the service is now stabilized on a maintenance basis. Professional services have increased slightly, but blacksmith shops and wagon yards have all but disappeared, as a result of the advent of the automobile.

At first glance, growth in population does not seem to support the contention of a stabilized condition within the city, since it showed an increase of approximately one thousand between 1920 and 1930,[7] and an estimated increase since that time of four or five hundred more. Upon close analysis, however, this growth does not disprove the statement. The momentum arising from World War conditions, the inflation of '28 and '29, the depression of 1930-35, the establishment in Conway of headquarters for a federal soil conservation project, and the rise of interest in higher education which affected population growth through its effect upon enrollments at the colleges, have accounted for this growth. Not one of these factors is lasting. Since the founding of the local

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[5] W. D. Ketcherside, member of the wholesale firm, M. K. Grocer Co.

[6] This excepts a fourth cotton gin, which later absorbed one of the pre-existing plants, and the Nona Lee Dress factory, which was closed in 1935 and moved to Memphis.

[7] In 1920, 4,564; in 1930, 5,534 (U. S. Census Reports).

colleges, many families, from time to time, have taken up temporary residence in Conway for the purpose of lowering the cost of a college education to one or more members of the family, a trend that made considerable progress between 1920 and 1930 but has since declined in accordance with conditions affecting the colleges. A census of the city taken by the writer in 1935 revealed that 40 per cent of the white population of the city at that time had been attracted to it by virtue of the presence of the colleges.[8] Moreover, it was found that this percentage had grown about 13 per cent since 1920 but had declined about 3 per cent since 1930,[9] a variation that closely fits enrollment trends at the colleges during the time. (See table, Fig. 13.) Hence, if the white popu-

Year	Enrollment, Regular Year	Summer Enrollment	Size of Staff[a]	College Income[b]	Value of Plants	Student Expenditures Exclusive of Fees[c]
1920	1,055	360 8 wks	57	$224,000	$ 847,000	$292,000
1925	1,531	1,336 6 wks	78	339,000	1,195,000	426,000
1930	1,257	1,774 6 wks	91	410,000	1,478,000	351,000
1935	1,196	1,038 6 wks	87	322,000	2,011,000	310,000
1937	1,332	.....	90	354,000	2,461,000	...

Fig. 13.--Statistics on the growth of the colleges from 1920 to 1935.

[a]Exclusive of janitors and cooks.

[b]Includes estimates for Central College.

[c]Estimates based on questionnaire data collected at the Arkansas State Teachers' College.

tion be reduced by these percentages, so as to get at factors more lasting in their effects, the increase is then reduced to less than two hundred on an estimated total population of 6,000

[8]This census consisted of a personal canvass of 428 white families picked at random from all residential sections of the city.

[9]These figures are only approximations, owing to the fact that the number of families which had removed from Conway during the time had to be estimated.

in 1935.[10] Moreover, many families have settled in Conway since 1933 as employees in the local soil conservation project or as Federal Relief enrollees attracted to the city in the hope of getting employment on some of the local Federal WPA projects.[11] In view of these facts, population growth for the period is not impressive.

Stability is further indicated by the trend in assessed valuation of real estate in Conway, as shown by the table, Figure 14. For example, the peak year of 1930, after having reaped the full effects of the inflation of 1928-29, was only about 15 per cent above the 1920 level and the 1935 figure was approximately 20 per cent below it. In other words, the variations from the 1920-25 level in 1930 and in 1935 were due to abnormal conditions in both cases.

Year	Total Assessment	5-Year Increase (%)	% Change from 1920 Level
1920	$1,034,813	84.2	...
1925	1,046,773	1.0	1.0
1930	1,195,675	14.4	15.5
1935	822,610	-31.2	-20.5

Fig. 14.--Trend in real estate assessments in Conway, 1920-1935.

An examination of conditions within the two controlling factors in the functional activities of the city, viz., the supporting rural area and the colleges, reveals further evidence of stability. As shown by the table in Figure 15, rural population, the number of farms, the amount of land in farms, and the amount of crop land have hardly maintained the 1920 level. The same condition is reflected by the figures in regard to all types of products, except dairy and poultry products. In fact, corn and hay, ranking second and third in acreage to cotton, have declined in

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[10] White population of the city in 1920 was 3,823 and in 1935 it was 4,975, based upon an estimated total population of 6,000 and a negro population of 1,025. Twenty-seven per cent of 3,823 is 1,032, leaving a white population of 2,791 unaffected by the presence of the colleges. Forty per cent of 4,975 is 1,990, leaving 2,985 as the white population so unaffected in 1935, or an increase of 194 whites.

[11] Especially those at the Teachers' College, of which there were several.

	1920	1925	1930	1935
Rural population..	23,117	....	22,847	....
Number of farms...	4,457	4,143	4,204	4,150
Land in farms (acres).....	307,003	300,221	303,985	329,465
Crop land (acres).	....	146,405	149,116	123,909
Idle or fallow land (acres)....	....	12,153	17,023	27,115
Plowable pasture (acres).....	....	21,813	27,539	29,718
Improved land (acres).....	175,466	180,371[a]	193,678[a]	180,742[a]
Cash value, farms and buildings...	$9,993,373	$8,533,234	$8,475,808	$5,037,012
Cash value, implements and mach..	$826,220	$753,347	$633,804	$342,523
Value of all crops	$6,173,246	....	$3,387,434	....
Value of all live stock.....	$1,974,131	....	$1,148,663	....
Dairy and poultry products sold...	$168,388	....	$316,543	....
Number of horses on farms.....	4,229	3,118	2,147	1,311
Mules and asses...	6,426	6,793	7,319	5,687
All cattle.....	14,234	11,918	13,082	15,087
Sheep.....	826	....	270	311
Swine.....	18,045	7,449	4,868	4,996
Corn (acres).....	47,149	44,338	33,987	39,249
Corn (bushels)....	651,517	611,000	360,609	149,204
Wheat (acres).....	1,957	127	3	40
Oats (acres).....	993	139	148	2,675
Cotton (acres)....	54,972	65,339	80,271	46,171
Potatoes (acres)..	622	664	707	1,113
Potatoes (bushels)	55,033	....	66,985	62,982
Sweet potatoes (acres).....	563	483	191	595
Sorghum for sirup (acres).....	1,282	646	80	....
Hay and forage (acres).....	21,067	13,883	11,358	18,888
Ratio of debt to value.....	34.5	....	39.57	....
Per capita farm income.....	$274.33	....	$162.12	....
Average size of farm (acres)....	68.9	72.5	72.3	79.4

Fig. 15.--Census data--Faulkner County

[a]Sum of crop land, idle or fallow, and plowable pasture.

Fig. 16.--The cultural pattern of Conway in 1935. Location and classification of cultural forms determined by field survey. Valuations are taken from Faulkner County Tax Records.

acreage since 1920, and all live stock except cattle declined in number. Any view of the rural area surrounding Conway leads to the same conclusion, viz., that it has reached or even surpassed its majority under the present system of farm economy.

The colleges, second in importance to agriculture in the life of Conway, likewise reflect a stabilized condition at the present time. It is true that they have grown in the aggregate during the period, as shown by the table, Figure 13, but the peak of enrollment was reached in 1925-26[12] and the maximum income, exclusive of building funds, was reached in 1929-30. Prospects now are not bright for them soon to exceed their former attainments.

Thus from the expressed trends in its various functional activities as well as by its two controlling environmental factors, the city has at least fully reached its majority, in so far as its adjustments to local factors are concerned. Although it has had its ups and downs since 1920, they have been in keeping with trends that were state-wide or national in scope, and do not reflect an unstable adjustment to the local environmental complex. At any rate, the continuous upward trend so characteristic of previous periods is not characteristic of the present period.

Some underlying factors that have contributed to stabilization of the functions of Conway and to its attainment of maturity relate to conditions in the supporting country-side. Others are state-wide in character. All of them are discussed in the complete dissertation. The development of land utilization within the city during the period, also discussed in the complete dissertation, is apparent from a comparison of Figures 12 and 16.

Close of the Period

It is reasonably clear that according to present trends and conditions Conway has reached the zenith of its growth under the present environmental complex. In its cultural development, which has been dominated by a college atmosphere, the city has assumed a rather sophisticated air, but in an economic sense it is faltering with misgivings.

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[12]This enrollment was just about maintained for the following three years, but began to decline in 1929.

CHAPTER V

THE OUTLOOK

In some respects the future of Conway seems reasonably clear; in others, it is dimmed by uncertainty. This discussion of the outlook for the city concerns itself with all foreseeable possibilities, both favorable and unfavorable, near and remote, so as to form a background upon which to trace in rough outline the prospects of the city. The outline cannot be filled in, since obviously all eventualities cannot be foreseen. Some of the possibilities to be considered are possibilities of the second order; that is, they are possible under conditions which themselves are not assured. One of them is the success of an educational campaign to acquaint all local interests with the possibilities that can be recognized and to incite them to vigorous coöperative action. In the absence or failure of such a campaign present trends or tendencies apparently would continue and they might conceivably permit the occurrence of other events to the impairment or destruction of pre-existing favorable prospects. In other words, inactivity or long delayed activity in acquainting all interests with the potentialities for further growth and development might be costly.

Trends and Tendencies

In the supporting country-side.--The prevailing type of agriculture in the supporting country-side cannot long maintain its present economic status if left to its own impulses. Soil exploitation for cotton in the region has reached its zenith and further progress in soil depletion is bound to effect a gradual reduction in the average size of the crop. If the price of cotton remains above ten cents, production will likely be maintained artificially for some time by the use of commercial fertilizer, but in a long view the maintenance of this price is by no means assured. The rise of the rayon industry and the growing importance of other cotton-producing regions of the world do not provide a

happy outlook for the American cotton belt.

Moreover, the procurement of further credit by most farmers of the region is impracticable, or at least difficult, as shown by the large number of mortgage foreclosures on farm property in recent years and by the severe restrictions now placed upon any extension of credit.[1] Hence the maintenance, even for a few years, of the present rural standard of living by the process of borrowing is hopeless. Clearly, a continuance of the present measure of dependence on cotton is certain to result in a reduced rural income which in turn means a decline in the business of Conway.

In retail trade.--More and more retail trade has been lost by Conway in recent years to Little Rock and to mail order houses. The psychological effect of size in attracting trade to larger centers has been vitalized since 1924 by the completion of a hard-surfaced highway between Conway and Little Rock and by a continuous increase in the number of local automobiles. At the same time, the retail customer has become more and more exacting in his demands, an attitude to which merchants and manufacturers alike have contributed through their selling campaigns. The result is that the small merchant now finds himself unable to carry stocks large enough to meet these diversified demands in full. For example, shoes are now made in such a large number of combinations, with respect to sizes and lasts, and people have come to demand these combinations to such an extent that the average dry goods merchant has practically lost his trade in shoes. Some merchants have discontinued handling them. Though there is a good shoe store in town, many Conway people assert emphatically that they cannot be properly fitted there. This condition arises not from the indifference of the local merchants to these demands--indeed some of them seem to be striving desperately to meet them--but rather from the growing discrimination exercised by the buying public. This trend has placed the small merchant at a distinct disadvantage, because of the increasing amount of capital required to provide goods in sufficient variety to satisfy the new demands. Moreover, the further improvement of the highway

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[1]Practically all credit to farmers now is in the hands of the federal government and is restricted to a fraction of the amount previously obtainable from private sources.

between Conway and Little Rock, which is just completed is almost certain to result in further diversion of trade to Little Rock.

An additional loss of retail trade in Conway has come about, as already noted, through the rise of mail-order houses. This diversion of trade, of course, is not of recent origin. It began in 1903, with the establishment of rural-mail service in Faulkner County, and has steadily gained in volume since that time--especially since 1911, when parcel-post mail service was instituted. In recent years, mail-order companies have notably increased their share of the trade both in Conway and the surrounding country-side by the establishment of branch houses at Memphis and Kansas City for quick delivery of goods to Arkansas, by the provision of free transportation of goods and liberal guarantees of quality to the customer, and by the adoption of a credit plan of selling. At the same time, the extension of credit by local merchants has been curtailed, and this procedure in turn has driven still more trade to the mail-order houses.[2]

This trend, however, is not likely to continue long because of the growing tendency of many people to abuse the privileges granted by these houses. Already some privileges have been withdrawn,[3] so that unless some other device is adopted by the mail-order houses to attract trade, a return of some business to Conway or to Little Rock is probable.

At the colleges.--Recent changes at the colleges have deprived the city of a considerable trade in groceries. Dormitories and dining halls[4] at the colleges have made possible the wholesale purchase of groceries for students boarding at these halls, with a corresponding loss of trade to local grocerymen.

Possibilities for Development

In farm economy.--The future growth of Conway depends not only upon some effective plan for checking the unfavorable trends,

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[2]There is a psychological factor involved here also. It is doubtless true, as contended by some merchants, that there are many customers who are better credit risks to outside firms than they are to local concerns.

[3]Real Silk Hosiery Mills has withdrawn its return privileges and Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward have withdrawn such privileges on automobile tires.

[4]Four new dormitories have been built since 1933.

as noted, but also upon the discovery and utilization of means for raising the aggregate income of the community. Several possibilities are open for the accomplishment of both of these ends, depending, as stated, upon the vitality of personal influences which might be brought to bear upon them. First and foremost is the possibility of a change to a more profitable form of farm economy. The plan generally advocated by agricultural experts consists of a reduction in cotton acreage with a corresponding increase in soil-conserving and soil-improving crops, along with other soil-reclaiming measures, and an increase in certain subsistence crops. The plan also calls for more dairy cattle, hogs, and poultry. Its accomplishment, in large measure, is easily attainable within the next ten or fifteen years. In fact, some drift in that direction is already under way in Faulkner County, as shown by the growth in the value of dairy products from $168,000 in 1920 to at least $500,000 in 1937.

Several agencies are contributing to the advancement of the program. First among these are the federally supported vocational agriculture schools which have grown up in the county in recent years and which now reach several hundred farm boys at nine or ten different centers. These schools not only provide free scientific training in agriculture to fit local conditions, but also serve as club activity centers for their respective communities whereby a greater interest in rural life is cultivated. Within the next few years they will doubtless produce a generation of farmers better fitted than the present one to analyze economic problems and to make readjustments in land utilization.

Agricultural extension work, supported jointly by the federal government, the state university, and the county, is also aiding in the promotion of the plan. This work is so well known that a discussion here is unnecessary. Suffice to say that for many years two well-trained agents, a man and a woman, have devoted their full time to an educational program among rural men and women of the county to the end that better economic and social adjustments to the environmental complex may be made. Years of work by these agents, assisted in their efforts by other forces,

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[5]The income from cream and whole milk alone during the month of June, 1937, was approximately $43,000. Information given by the local County Agent.

have broken down much of the old opposition to the program, so that it is likely to move forward with more effectiveness than in the past.

Another agency is the agricultural department at the local State Teachers' College. This department owes its effectiveness to the close relationship that it holds to the surrounding countryside. Many students from rural communities of the county come to it for training in agriculture and return later to their respective communities as farmers or teachers. Staff members of the department frequently appear on programs at various local community gatherings. Moreover, this department maintains one of the better dairy herds of the state, which is frequently exhibited at stock-judging contests sponsored by the college for vocational agriculture boys of the county and surrounding counties. These activities have contributed much to the growth of interest in scientific agriculture and especially in dairying.

The existing type of contract under which federal crop loans or subsidies are granted is helping to promote the program. These contracts require the growing of soil-conserving or soil-improving crops on stipulated acreages and encourage a general conservative agricultural program, as viewed in terms of a long period of time. It now directly affects about half the farmers of the county and, so long as such contracts are made, will in the future affect a greater or less number of them inversely in accordance with the price of cotton. It should be mentioned, too, that the federal plan of directing its rehabilitation program is helping to educate people in the value and uses of subsistence crops.[6] The continuation of this program under close supervision will do much to arouse many country people from their apparent lethargy and to set them on the way to economic independence. In fact, some form of coercion or direction must be applied in many cases in order that individual self support may be assured.

Impetus to the process has also been given by activities connected with the federal soil conservation project, located within the county, with headquarters at Conway. In carrying on

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[6]The establishment of canning kitchens under the direction of a federally paid trained supervisor, and the government requirement of a certain amount of canned fruits and vegetables to each family receiving such aid suggest the importance of this factor.

this project the government not only conducts a widespread educational campaign in the promotion of a sound conservation program but enters into coöperative contracts with farmers, living within the limits of the project, for practical demonstrations of its application. Being the first and largest project in the state, its influence is already notably felt.

The recent entry of Swift and Company into the county as manufacturers of dairy products is certain to stimulate interest in dairying. All relevant resources of this company are now employed in the conduct of an educational campaign on this industry. The company is completely overhauling its plant, taken over from the defunct Faulkner County Dairy Company, and expects to stimulate enough local development of dairying within the next few years to run the plant at full capacity. This company, through its efforts to build up a permanent and profitable business, is expected to aid the surrounding rural sections in the realization of higher farm incomes.

Still another factor favoring advancement of the program is the active support now given to it by commercial interests of Conway, especially by the retail merchants. In large part, this support is expressed through the activities of the local civic clubs, of which there are five.[7] Recently the Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs sponsored a movement by which some thirty high quality registered Jersey heifers were brought into the county. All of these clubs include in their activities the cultivation of a sympathetic understanding between rural and city dwellers, and they frequently hold meetings at rural centers at which competent speakers, provided by them, discuss topics of common interest. These activities are bound to contribute something to the effectiveness of the educational program.

Finally, success already has been attained by many farmers who have dared to undertake a diversified program of land use. This statement applies particularly to foreign-born farmers and their children who, with their European background, have more naturally taken a long-range view of the agricultural situation and have more readily entered upon the venture than the descendents of their pioneer predecessors have done. Their success is

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[7]Rotary, Kiwanis, Young Business Men, American Legion, and Commercial Club.

attested by the fact that despite their arrival a half-century ago in almost abject poverty and despite their settlement on some of the poorer land in the vicinity of Conway, which their needy state forced them to do, they now, as a group, represent the most prosperous farming element in the county.[8] Although religious differences prevent free intercourse between these people and their Protestant neighbors, their farming successes stand as conspicuous examples of what can be done and of what soon or later may become general.

With all these agencies in operation, it appears safe to predict that the agricultural situation will change for the better within the next few years. How rapidly it will change depends largely on the price of cotton. Any condition which tends to depress the price below ten cents will hasten the process, whereas any condition that tends to hold it above this level will do the contrary.

In trade.--A second possibility for business improvement in Conway is through enlargement of the city's trade area. Such enlargement can be brought about only by extensive improvements of highways leading into Conway, and the prospect of such improvements is uncertain because they must be made largely with foreign capital which is hardly susceptible to local demands. However, there apparently are two major considerations with respect to highway construction which might be employed in Conway's behalf. The first is the matter of speed and safety for the motorist. According to highway engineers,[9] this means widening and straightening present highways or building new ones, especially for the accommodation of through traffic. Some of the new roads will undoubtedly be located so as to reduce distances between major centers and to avoid large cities. If and when the capacity of U. S. Highway 70 between Little Rock and Memphis (Fig. 17) is overtaxed, consideration might well be given to building a new

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[8] Records for checking this point are not open for inspection, but bank and post-office officials state that the average deposits and savings accounts of these people are well above those for the county as a whole; and the local Catholic priest states that every farm belonging to members of his parish is free from debt and at the time of the interview in 1935 every family owned an automobile or a truck.

[9] See the Annual Report of the Arkansas Highway Commission, 1935-36.

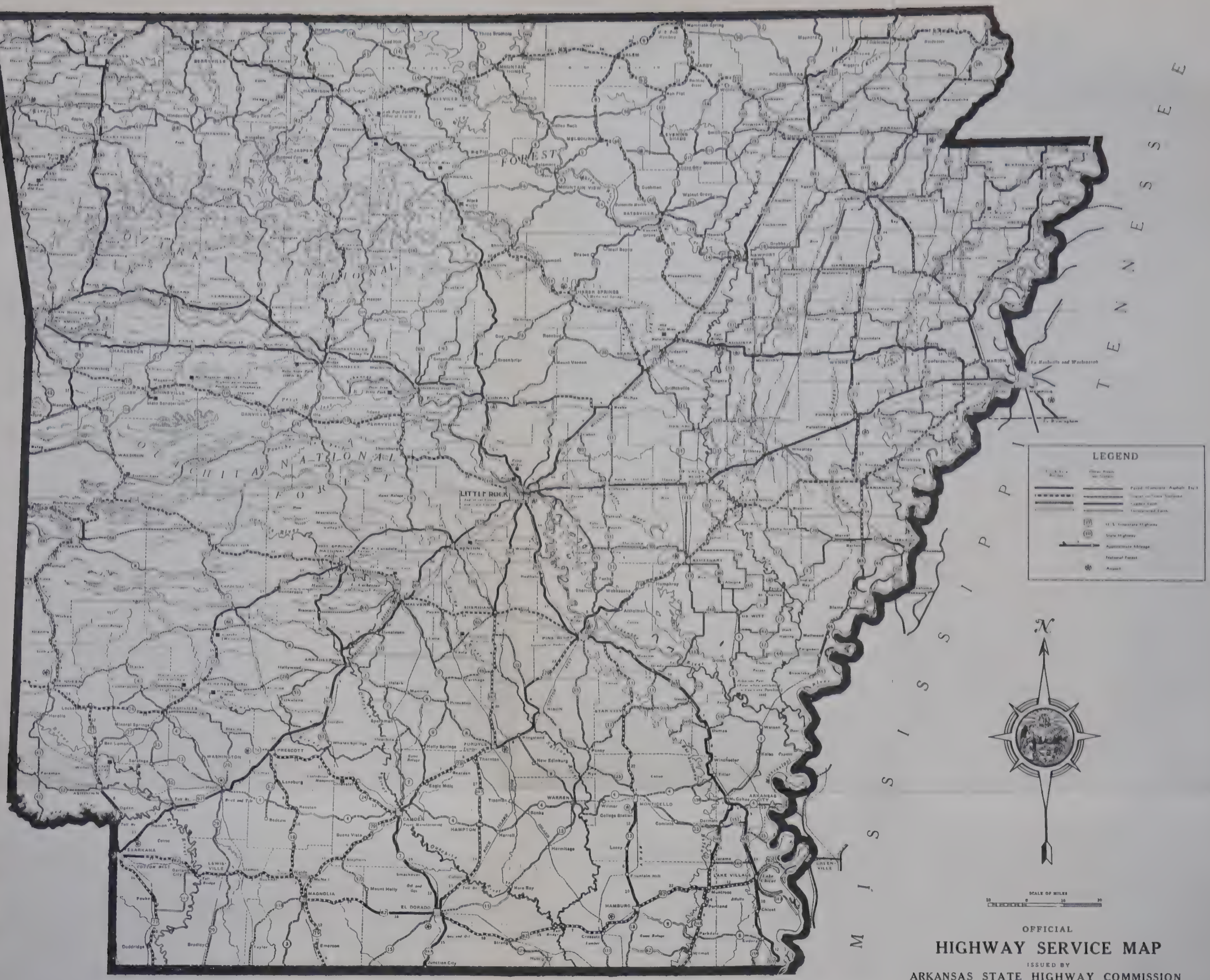

Fig. 17.--The transportational pattern of Arkansas as of 1935. Reproduced from a map of that date by the Arkansas State Highway Commission, Little Rock.

highway due west from Forrest City, crossing White River, over a bridge already constructed at Des Arc, and leading thence west to Beebe, where it would join U. S. Highway 64 to Conway. Pursuing its westward course, this highway might be extended across Arkansas River over State Highway 60 and follow State Highway 10 to Fort Smith. The eastward extension of this highway would shorten the distance between Fort Smith and Memphis by about thirty miles and save at least an hour's time. The westward extension would make no material difference in this distance but would give relief to a heavy traffic over Highway 64 between Conway and Russellville. This extension to the west, however, would require the construction of a bridge across the Arkansas River and it would have to be a free bridge to compete with a similar one at Dardanelle, fifty miles up stream. Such development to the west would open up between fifty and one hundred square miles of new trade territory to Conway merchants, much of which is highly productive bottom land (Fig. 17).

The second consideration with respect to new highway construction is in the matter of providing scenic routes. In the event such routes are built in Arkansas two of them might be located so as to benefit Conway. One of them could be built southwest from State Highway 60, assuming that the Arkansas River is bridged, through the Ouachita National Forest in the Ouachita Mountains and by the new artificial lake on Alum Fork of Saline River, to U. S. Highway 70 at a point about twelve miles northeast of Hot Springs (Fig. 17). This would not only provide a scenic route to Hot Springs superior to Highway 70, but would also save about thirty miles to all traffic bound for Hot Springs from the north over U. S. Highway 65. The other scenic route could be built in a northwesterly direction from Conway, leaving Highway 65 about fifteen miles to the north of the city and taking a general northwesterly course through the Boston Mountains and the Ozark National Forest to Jasper in Newton County. From Jasper, the road would proceed northward to re-enter Highway 65 at Harrison (Fig. 17). This highway, about half of which already is built, would provide probably the highest class scenic route in the state. It would pass near the nationally famous Diamond Cave and would add little to the distance between Harrison and Little Rock. Built as a first class highway, it doubtless would attract many summer tourists. If these highways are constructed, Conway not

only will win additional tourist trade but also will win trade from the west and northwest now going to Morrilton, Perryville, Bigelow, and even to Little Rock.

More immediate prospects for highway construction, in which Conway is concerned, relate to the rebuilding of twenty miles of U. S. Highway 65 northward from Conway and, probably within a few years, of U. S. Highway 64 from Conway eastward to the junction with U. S. Highway 67 (Fig. 17). The probability of these improvements lies in the fact that they are links in national transcontinental highways and are the only remaining stretches of inferior road along these routes within the state. These highways now draw comparatively little traffic through Conway, particularly foreign traffic; hence it is reasonably certain that their improvement would increase the tourist traffic over them several fold and thus bring added income to Conway business concerns. Moreover, the rapid growth in tourist traffic everywhere, and the preference it is showing for scenic routes, is almost certain to give Conway some prominence as a southern gateway to the Ozarks. If all the highway improvements noted were consummated, Conway would assume about the same position in this respect that Springfield, Missouri, holds on the north side of the Ozarks.

In relation to Little Rock.--Another basis for the further growth of Conway is found in its potential suburban relationship to Little Rock. Even now the families of some forty or fifty traveling men, whose business connections are in Little Rock or elsewhere, reside in Conway, according to the secretary of the local chamber of commerce. Local advantages in higher education, low rents, a reputable cultural atmosphere, and a generally expressed preference for residential suburbs, lend plausability to a prediction of some growth in this respect. Moreover, the recent improvement to the highway between the two cities, which reduces the average time of motor travel between them to about forty minutes, will doubtless give some impetus to the trend. The development of this relationship is contingent upon several factors, however, among which are the rate of growth of the population of Little Rock[10] and the general trend toward suburbanization. According to census reports, metropolitan Little Rock has almost doubled in population in the last twenty years, rising from about

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[10]Including North Little Rock and environs of both cities.

57,000 in 1910 to about 108,000 in 1930.[11] The density of population in this metropolitan area is not great, however, and the prospective increase in density cannot be expected to force any large number of people out to suburban areas. Nevertheless the fact that about 6,000[12] people gravitated to such areas around Little Rock between 1920 and 1930 reflects a significant trend. If this outward movement continues, it is almost inevitable that preference will be given to places along main highways, in which event a spread into Conway may be anticipated. Provided certain other conditions are met, it is not unlikely that Conway may experience a growth in population of two or three thousand from this source within the next twenty years. But, as intimated, there are certain prerequisites to continuance of the process. The residential advantages of Conway, as noted, must be maintained and, in addition, there must be provided still other attractive features, especially in the form of public facilities for recreation and child welfare. A city planning board should be created to study the possibilities for such improvements and to plan for their realization. Such a program should certainly provide for parks, play grounds, restricted residential areas, and general city beautification. It should also give attention to the improvement of the water supply and to any other public feature that would add to the comfort and enjoyment of home life. The resources of the colleges should be utilized more fully. Finally, the attractive features of Conway should be effectively advertised.

In respect to the colleges.--A further possibility for growth of the city lies in the future of the colleges. As previously indicated, the outlook for any immediate material expansion of these schools is not bright. However, the assured increase in financial aid to the public schools of the state through the recently enacted sales tax and the probability of further increase during the next few years, as the full effects of the tax come to be realized, are almost certain to add to the enrollment of all

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[11]The population of the two cities in 1910 was 57,079, and in 1930 it was 101,097. However, the growth in population of Pulaski County during this time was about 7,000 more, practically all of which represents suburban development, giving a present population of about 108,000.

[12]Difference between growth of the two cities and the growth of the county.

colleges of the state and particularly to that of the teacher-training institutions. The 2 per cent sales tax of 1935, revised in 1937, now assures an increase in revenue for public schools of approximately 70 per cent[13] and further growth in revenue is likely to be shown as economic conditions and methods of collection improve.

With such improvement in sight, public school teachers' salaries will rise, a condition that will enable many of them to further their training and one that will attract many others into the profession, with the consequent effect of a general increase in enrollments for all of the colleges of the state. Of course, Conway colleges would share in this growth.

In addition to this outlook of the local colleges, there is the possibility of growth in enrollment from their own inducements. From General Education Board and federal[14] sources, plants have been greatly improved since 1930, as shown by the table, Figure 13, and now are second to none among the colleges of the state. Faculties and curricula have been strengthened and more emphasis is being given to a directed program of physical, recreational and social activities. These inducements are well advertised by circulars and by field representatives and should prove effective.

In manufacturing.--As already indicated, manufactural development in Conway is not to be expected under present conditions; and the chance for improving conditions is remote because it depends almost entirely on outside resources. As explained in the complete dissertation, labor conditions in Conway already are favorable and with cheap power and transportation, more or less industrial development there would be assured.

Résumé

The future of Conway, as indicated in various ways, is obscured by uncertainties. If all available agencies are actively and successfully employed, it has a chance for rejuvenation by

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[13]Based on the maximum levy of 18 mills for school purposes and a state assessment of $426,000,000, and a sales tax income of $10,000,000, 60 per cent of which is allotted to the public schools (State Department of Education).

[14]Through RFC, PWA, and WPA projects.

which it might attain a population of twelve or fifteen thousand in the next two or three decades. It might, on the other hand, easily lose one or two thousand of its present population within that time. Probably the real prospect lies somewhere between these extremes. Probably, too, modest growth and temporary decline will alternate with fluctuating economic conditions. Perhaps one may reasonably envisage a community of some eight thousand inhabitants, a community possessing essentially the same landscape features that Conway now has and performing essentially the same functional activities. The possibility of an advance to even greater heights constitutes a challenge to all local interests.